

T H E
PRACTICAL PREACHER:

CONSISTING OF
SELECT DISCOURSES

From the WORKS of the

Most eminent PROTESTANT WRITERS:

WITH
FORMS of DEVOTION for the Use
of FAMILIES.

V O L. IV.

L O N D O N:
Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DEHONDT, at Tully's
Head, in the Strand.
MDCCCLXII.

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S E R M O N I.

Christian Humility.

By the Rev. Dr. EVANS.

COL. iii. 12. middle of the verse.

Humbleness of mind.

The whole verse runs thus,

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.



THE first instance of being wise for ourselves, is to put the principal value upon that part of ourselves which is most noble and durable, our souls; and to use our main diligence for securing their welfare. It is another branch of wisdom, to make a right estimate of ourselves, compared with other beings, either above us, or of the same order with ourselves. Christian Humility is the very temper to which such a

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B

thought

thought will lead us. And that is to be our present subject.

St. Paul in the 9th and 10th verses of this chapter, expresses his charitable hope of the Colossians, that they had *put off the old man with his deeds; and had put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him*; and hereupon, in the text and some following verses, enumerates several particular excellencies, which are parts of the new man; and therefore he exhorts these Colossians to *put them on*.

If any should say, since the apostle had already supposed that they had put them on, why does he yet exhort them to do so; especially why does he therefore exhort them to it? The answer is plain. His charitable hope was founded upon their avowed profession of Christianity, which was in other words a profession to have put on the new man: he therefore justly exhorts them to shew that this their profession was sincere and genuine, and his hope concerning them well founded, by all the actual and proper expressions of a renewed disposition. Or, supposing them to have been undoubtedly renewed already, yet there would be room for improvement and advances in every part of the Christian temper; and therefore they should still put on the new man more and more, daily grow in the strength, and activity, and just expressions of every holy disposition. Among these, *humbleness of mind*, our present subject, is reckoned up for one.

My

Christian Humility.

3

My business shall be, I. To explain the nature of this holy temper. And, II. To shew the special obligations which lie upon us as Christians to cultivate it.

I. I would explain the nature of this temper, or shew wherein true humility of mind consists.

The word ταπεινοφροσύνη which is here and in several other places of the New Testament used to express this Christian virtue, signifies in general a low apprehension or esteem: and from the scope of the places, though the word does not directly express so much, it must mean a low apprehension or esteem of ourselves. I think the apostle's exhortation in Rom. xii. 3. is a natural paraphrase upon that in the text; *I say, thro' the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly.* It stands directly opposed to pride and arrogance. Generally the word is used in Scripture in a good sense; but twice in one chapter of this epistle in a bad one, Col. ii. 18, 23. for a base and unworthy subjection of mind; which shews, that there is occasion to guard against mistakes in this matter, as well as to illustrate the excellent temper designed to be expressed by it.

It is farther to be observed, that the word leads us to consider it principally as a disposition of mind; suitable to the scheme I am upon. There may be a seeming Humility of outward expression and behaviour, which covers a every proud heart. But Christians are called to put on *humbleness of mind*, and not only a

humble demeanor ; though Humility in the heart will certainly produce the proper fruits in the behaviour.

The actings of this temper will be best discerned in a relative view, as we entertain a humble opinion of ourselves, compared either with God or with our fellow creatures. And the description of it, as well as the distinguishing of it from what is unworthy and unbecoming, may, I think, naturally fall under the following particulars.

1. A humble apprehension of our own knowledge. *Knowledge*, St. Paul observes, *puffeth up*, is very apt to do so. 1 Cor. viii. 1. There is nothing which men are more ready to be proud of, and to think better of themselves in beyond desert. Many would sooner bear a reflection upon their moral character, than upon their understandings. One would think the serpent was early sensible, that this was man's weak side, when he made use of that artifice to seduce our first parents, to assure them, that if they would but follow his counsel, *they should be as Gods, knowing good and evil*, Gen. iii. 5. and we may remember what an unhallowed flame this kindled in their inclination. And though they soon had sad evidence of the falshood and folly of the suggestion ; yet notwithstanding so clear a confutation, there is no part of original sin, which they seem to have derived more universally and more strongly to their posterity, than a proud surmise that they have gained what the Devil then promised. No branch of pride hath more need

need of a cure, though indeed none hath less to support it, than conceit of our own knowledge. *Vain man would be wise, and would be esteemed wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt,* Job xi. 12. Now the beginning of Humility, and indeed of true wisdom, lies in moderating our conceit of our own sufficiency this way. And so it will include,

(1.) A sense of the natural imperfection of our faculties. There is indeed a dignity in our natures in comparison of the lower creation, as God hath made us intelligent beings; but we should ever remember, that the faculties he has given us are but finite and limited at the best; and that many things are above them, which they cannot grasp, *things too wonderful for us, which we know not,* Job xlii. 3. We find it so even in natural things; the wisest and the greatest men will readily own themselves to be posed in several of these; and much more may it be expected to be so in things supernatural; especially in what belongs to the great God, his nature, and purposes, and the mysteries of his providence. *Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?* Job xi. 7.

Now a just sense of this imperfection of our own capacities, will dispose us absolutely to credit God's testimony, as far as he has been pleased to give it, and we can discern his mind, whatever difficulties may attend that revelation, as to the manner of things discovered by it, beyond our capacity to solve. God's word alone will be a sufficient reason of faith to a humble mind.

And on the other hand, it would teach us not to pretend to be wise above what is written in matters of pure revelation; not to venture to form schemes of our own, to account how such things are, where none are delivered in God's word; at least, not to be positive and dogmatical in them; but in the *deep things of God*, to satisfy ourselves to understand so much of them as God hath revealed by his Spirit in his word; because such things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God, any farther than he has been pleased to make them known, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

(2.) An apprehension of our own infallibility, and liableness to mistake, even where we may think we judge right. When we consider the power of prejudice, or readiness to make rash and hasty judgments, the plausible colours which may be put upon error, the indisposition of our minds in our fallen state for the admission of divine truths; when we consider these things, we have reason in most judgments we form, to carry this cautionary thought along with us, that it is possible we may be mistaken. Who is there among us who is not conscious to himself that he hath actually been mistaken in many former judgments he hath made of things, even in some wherein once he was very positive? And certainly this is a good reason, why we should carry the thought of our fallibility about with us in our future time. Those indeed who have made the deepest searches, and the most impartial enquiries in every age, have discovered most mistakes in themselves; and therefore have justly entertained

tained the most lively sense of the possibility of their being still mistaken in many things.

Now Humility in this view would teach us,

Not indeed upon that account to surrender ourselves to the absolute conduct and government of other men who are fallible as well as we. To this the church of Rome would lead us, but in pretence of infallibility to rest ourselves upon; though they neither are agreed among themselves where to place it, nor give us any proof from Scripture or their own conduct, that such a glorious gift is lodged with them. If any others would lead us to such an implicit faith in their dictates, while they disclaim infallibility, their claim is still more absurd. If our judgments be not so good, or our capacities not so enlarged, as our neighbours; yet we are obliged to make the best of them, and to judge for ourselves. Christ blames the body of the Jewish people for *not judging of themselves what was right*, Luke xii. 57. We must answer for ourselves to God in the great day; and therefore it can neither be a laudable nor a safe Humility, to take our religion from the dictates of any fallible man or number of men.

But a just apprehension of our own liability to mistake, should induce us in all our searches after divine truth to be very desirous of divine illumination and guidance; that God by his Spirit of truth would *shew us his ways, teach us his paths, and lead us in his truth*, Psal. xxv. 4, 5. It should keep us ever open

to farther light, willing to learn; we should never behave, as if we had made our last understanding, but be willing on any proper occasion to review our sentiments, and to allow a cool and unprejudiced consideration of what may be said against them. And though we should not see reason to change our own thoughts upon such inquiries, but be more confirmed in them; yet we should be tender in our censures of others, whom we apprehend to be mistaken, as long as they give credible evidence in other respects that they are conscientious.

(3.) A moderate apprehension of our own attainments in knowledge, when we compare them with the attainments of other men. Every good man indeed judges himself to be in the right in every particular sentiment which he maintains; for if he was convinced that it was an error, he would give it up: and it must necessarily follow from hence, that he cannot but think those of a contrary judgment to be mistaken, as long as he judges himself in the right. Is he therefore to be puffed up above others? No, by no means. But it is a becoming Humility in most cases, even where we think ourselves in the right, yet to believe it possible however that those who differ from us may be in the right; and therefore to be willing to hear what they have to offer for their judgment. If we judge our knowledge superior to others with whom we compare ourselves; yet we should still remember that *in this life we all know but in part*, 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

If

If some know less, others know more than we : if we are better acquainted with some particulars, they may exceed us in other parts of knowledge. We may have made less improvement in proportion to our greater advantages, than they have made of fewer opportunities : and especially that after all, we owe it more to the providence of the grace of God than to ourselves, that we are distinguished from the most stupid and ignorant in the world. Humility therefore will keep us from despising any, and incline us to learn all we can, even from the meanest : for it will possess us with this truth, 1 Cor. viii. 2. *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, and, as the context shews the Apostle to mean, because of that knowledge despiseth others, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.*

(4.) A persuasion of the small value of the most exalted knowledge, without a suitable practical influence. Knowledge even of divine things, is of little valuable use but in subservience to practice. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* John xiii. 7. It will not render us more acceptable to God, but more inexcusable, and liable to *be beaten with many stripes*, if we rest in the most extensive knowledge, Luke xii. 47, 48. A man comparatively of low attainments in knowledge, if his heart is right with God, is truly acceptable; while a resolved sinner, though he understood all mysteries, will be eternally disowned by him. And no wonder, since exalted knowledge may

may leave a man of no better a temper than a devil.

2. Humble thoughts of our own goodness, is another branch of humbleness of mind. Not that we are required to be insensible of any thing that is truly good and valuable in us: But Christian Humility includes

A sense of the undeservingness of our own goodness at the hands of God, even if it was perfect. Whatever the pride of nature may suggest, this is the lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, Luke xvii. 10. *When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do, and no more.* It could not properly deserve divine favour; how much less capable are we of merit by any thing we do in our lapsed state?

An apprehension of the great disparity there is between the goodness of God, and the goodness of any creature: from which our Saviour teaches us to conclude, that *none is good save one, that is God*, Luke xviii. 19. None is originally, absolutely, necessarily and unchangeably good, but God only. Created goodness is derived from God; compared with his, it is incomplete, and capable of addition; and in its own nature it is changeable, as we find the goodness of angels and of innocent man was in fact.

An affecting conviction of our own sinfulness, and of the guilt contracted by it. Evangelical Humility implies a sense of our lost and miserable state by the apostacy; so that we can-

cannot lay claim of ourselves to the divine mercy, and yet can have no hope without mercy: that we are not only less than the least of his mercies, but have forfeited them all, and deserve ill, deserve wrath at his hands; and could not hope to stand, if he should mark iniquity: that from a lively sense of this, we are heartily willing to be beholden to the gospel-way of relief by the atonement and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rely upon that alone for our pardon and acceptance with God, as conscious we have nothing in ourselves to rely upon. This is one principal part of Gospel Humility, that we see ourselves *sick*, and therefore to *need the physician*; and *sinners, who need repentance*, Luke v. 31, 32. That we humbly call to remembrance our particular offences, and penitently confess them before God, suing for his pardoning mercy in Christ, with the temper of the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, Luke xviii. 13. And that from a sense of our desert of worse, we cheerfully submit to his present corrections. We must proudly forget our own case, when we repine at his mild discipline.

A sense of the imperfection of our goodness at the best in this world, is another branch of Humility to which the gospel leads us. If we are recovered from the dominion of sin, yet, without insufferable pride, we shall see reason to confess that we sin daily, and come short of the glory of God; that we *cannot understand all our errors*, and need to be *cleansed from our secret faults*, Psal. xix. 12. that no grace or holy dis-

disposition is compleat in us, but ever needs improvement, and is subject to interruption in its exercise and great decays.

An acknowledgment that we are principally indebted to God for whatever is good in us, is also to be comprehended. That we principally owe to him the beginning of any good work in us; and must expect from him the perfecting of it, Phil. i. 6. If we are better than others, we owe it to the grace of God, who hath *made us to differ.* 1 Cor. iv. 7. Either we were as bad as any, till we were *washed, and justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God,* 1 Cor. vi. 11. or we might have been as bad, was it not for the restraints of his providence or grace. In a word, the humble soul, whatever goodness he is conscious of, has this for the abiding and thankful sense of his soul, *By the grace of God I am what I am,* 1 Cor. xv. 10.

And lastly, a modest apprehension of our own goodness, compared with that of other men, must enter into the Christian temper. I say not, that Christian Humility will oblige us to condemn ourselves as worse than all others; though as we know ourselves best, it is ordinarily true, that we know more amiss in ourselves, as to the number if not the kinds of sins, than we can do in any other particular person. But it will dispose us to esteem as well at least of other people's goodness, as of our own, as far as there are credible evidences of it: in which sense the apostle exhorts, Phil. ii. 3. *In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than*

than themselves. We should not admit uncharitable jealousies and evil surmisings of them, where we have no just foundation; but think the best of them that we can, and observe their excellencies as well as their defects: the excellencies in which they may shine above us, though we should exceed them in some others. Humility will incline us to make all charitable allowances for their failings and defects, when we are conscious of so many of our own, to censure them with gentleness, Rom. ii. 1. *to restore them in the spirit of meekness*, Gal. vi. 1. and not vauntingly to say to any, *Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou*, Isa. lxv. 5. A lowly mind will consider even the worst of men as such with whom we partake in the same nature, the same sinful nature; who are bought with the same price as we; who have an offer of the same spiritual and eternal blessings; and are at least capable, by the same grace which hath made us to differ from them, of the same everlasting happiness.

3. An humble sense of our dependance and wants.

And here first and principally we are concerned to have a humble sense of our dependance on God, and our need of him. That in the sphere of nature we cannot subsist of our selves, but *live, and move, and have our beings, in him*, Acts xvii. 28. That *our times are in his hands*, the time of our continuance in life, the circumstances of our lot and condition, and all the particular events that can any way concern us. *If he takes away our breath we die, and return*

return to our dust, and cannot recall it for a moment longer. Our understandings and reasonable powers continually depend on him. A slight touch of the brain may soon raze out all the traces of wisdom and knowledge, and change a wise man into a fool or a madman, unless God protect our powers in their regular course. If he will speak peace, who can speak trouble? and if he will exercise us with rebukes, we are never out of his reach, but he can easily make a way to his anger. We hold no comforts by any tenure but his pleasure. He has an unlimited, uncontrollable power over us, and an indisputable right to do with us as seems good in his sight. If our souls are under the power of these apprehensions, Humility will teach us to live in daily dependance on him for every thing we need: to expect our supplies from his favour and blessing, more than from the kindness of our friends, or from the wisest measures we can take ourselves: to maintain a constant thankfulness for the bounties of providence; not to be much lifted up for the sake of any of those loseable comforts; and to suppress every fretful and impatient murmur at any of the events that befall us.

And in the sphere of grace, we should have an equal sense of our constant need of his influences. That we need his mercy to pardon our sins, and help our infirmities every day. That we can perform no religious exercise well, nor discharge the duty of any relation commendably, nor acquit ourselves honourably in any trial, nor make any advances in the divine life,

life, nor be blessings in our generation, without the light and grace of his good Spirit. That we need his quickening influences to think a good thought, and to bring it to maturity; his supplies of light and strength to overcome any temptation, to succeed in any conflict, or even to maintain the ground we have already gained. To live in the constant lively sense of this, and therefore not to trust in our own hearts or our best endeavours, but in his grace and blessing, is one eminent part of *walking humbly with our God.*

But then, secondly, a humble sense of our subordinate dependance upon our fellow-creatures, and the need we have of them, is not to be omitted in the description of Humility. We should consider, that by the law of our creation, our condition is so ordered, that we cannot comfortably subsist independent of our fellow-creatures. Even those in the most advanced and easy circumstances of life, need the assistance of their inferiors; yea the plenty they enjoy could not enable them to be more at ease than the meanest, if they had not the benefit of their labours. *The king himself is served by the field,* Eccl. v. 9. and is indebted to the industry and pains of those who cultivate it: and the various conveniencies and accommodations of life which some enjoy above others, could not be attained with all their wealth, if the diligence and skill of those much below them was wanting. Every link in the chain of societies contributes to the good of the whole. In the body politic, as well as in the natural

natural body, and in the body of Christ, *the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you: — But God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body,* 1 Cor. xii. 21, 24. This should make all sensible of their dependant state, and of their interest in the society to which they belong. And besides this dependance of the highest and the lowest at all times; it should be remembered farther, that in the changeableness of human affairs, those who are now in the most prosperous estate, know not how soon they may need the kind offices, the goodwill of those in the lowest condition of life. Instances of such an alteration continually occur, and therefore should abate the pride of those who may now be most exalted. This naturally leads us to a fourth branch of Humility.

4. A modest apprehension of our own rank and station.

And, compared with the blessed God, we cannot think too low of ourselves. So *the nations are as a drop of a bucket; and are counted as the small dust of the ballance: behold he taketh up the isles as a very little thing,* Isa. xl. 15. All the relations in which we stand to him, bespeak the profoundest submission due from us: as we are his creatures, his subjects, preserved by him every moment, disposed of at his pleasure, and such as must appear at his bar. The very relation of children, which bespeaks the greatest friendship on his part, and
freedom

freedom on ours, yet obliges to Humility before him. All lead us highly to magnify him, and to abase ourselves: so the very angels above behave. His condescension should be adored in every favour he shews, because he *humbleth himself to behold the things in heaven or upon earth.* And therefore the language of our hearts upon the view of all his benefits, should be like David's, Psal. viii. 4. *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Psal. cxliv. 3. *Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man that thou makest account of him?* Or with Job, chap. vii. 17. *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him? that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?* Humility will teach us neither to dispute the precepts nor the providence of one who needs not our consent to give him a right to rule us, but has a natural authority over us, and is necessarily and infinitely exalted above us.

Revelation also teaches us to consider ourselves as beneath many other invisible beings, by the state of our creation: as *made lower than the angels*, Psal. viii. 5. A rank of creatures, behind them in the original capacity of our natures, while even the highest of them is infinitely beneath the blessed God.

And for our fellow-creatures of the human race, we should consider them all, as of the same nature with us, and therefore near akin; *God having made of one blood all nations of men, that dwell on the face of the earth*, Acts xvii. 26. That any distinctions made by outward

circumstances, are in the account of God and in themselves, really but little things: that if the distinctions made between us and others, in the figure made in the world, were ever so important, the providence of God has been much more concerned than we, in making that difference: and that all differences between men, besides those of true goodness, will entirely cease with the stroke of death.

In such a state of our case, Humility will dispose to the chearful performance of the duties of humanity to all men; esteeming them all as our brethren, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. We shall not put any mighty value upon ourselves, merely because we may enjoy a larger share than others of the riches or honours of the world; but reckon the human nature, which they partake of along with us, to set us all more upon the level, than the differences of outward rank can exalt one in value above another; and esteem goodness to enoble and recommend more than mere greatness. But since the providence of God, our common ruler, is principally concerned in the differences made in mens outward rank, a humble mind will not think much of observing the duties to others, whether above or below him, which the word of God hath annexed even to those providential differences between their and his own lot. If they are above him, he will chearfully *render them their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*, Rom. xiii. 7. And on the other hand,

if

if he stands in a superior rank, will readily *condescend to men of low estate*, xii. 16. Be willing to do to them any good offices in his power, and to treat them with modesty and courteousness, without any thing of supercilious contempt.

These things may set in a competent light the nature of the Christian virtue of Humility. It will be your wisdom to turn in upon your selves by way of reflection, and to enquire how the temper of your own spirits stands in this matter. We shall see in the next discourse the importance of the enquiry.

S E R M O N II.

Christian Humility.

By the same AUTHOR.

COL. iii. 12. middle of the verse.

Put on—Humbleness of mind.

II. I Am to shew the special obligations which lie upon us as Christians, to cultivate a humble temper.

1. Humility is a grace of the first rank and eminence in christianity. So that while it seems to carry in the notion of it a lessening of ourselves, it exalts a man in the Christian character above any thing else. This may appear several ways.

(1.) It is mentioned in Scripture with peculiar marks of distinction and honour. Under the Old Testament, when God would sum up the things which are eminently good in his account, this is marked for one, Mic. vi. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good : and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy*

thy God? Pride is stigmatized as his peculiar abhorrence; but Humility honoured with the fullest testimonies of his approbation. *Pride and arrogancy—do I hate*, says Wisdom, Prov. viii. 13. *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; but the proud he knoweth afar off.* Psal. cxxxviii. 6. When the Son of God condescended in our nature to instruct mankind, he set Humility in the front of his beatitudes, and at the head of his excellent sermon, Matt. v. 4. *Blessed are the poor in spirit*: as if it was the first lesson in which he would have his disciples instructed. The importance of it, and the rank it holds in our religion, is still more emphatically described by him in another place, Matt. xviii. 4. *Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven*, or in the gospel-church, the Christian dispensation: As if he had said, He that excels in Humility, is the greatest and the best Christian. It is a laudable ambition to aspire at this foremost rank of honour among the disciples of Christ.

(2.) The most distinguished promises are made to it: such as mark it out for a temper eminently in the way of divine favour. The prayers of the humble are entitled to a peculiar regard, Psal. ix. 12. *He forgetteth not the cry of the humble.* Psal. x. 17. *Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble; thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear.* They are encouraged to expect the gracious presence of God abiding with them, Isa. lvii. 15. *Thus saith the high and lofty one that inhabiteth*

habiteth eternity, whose name is holy : I dwell in the high and holy place ; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones : so does the divine Majesty condescend ; as if he would signify to us, that in a sort with the humble he will shew himself humble. Such are assured of farther measures of grace. While God resisteth the proud, he giveth grace to the humble. Jam. iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5. The proud shall miss of the aim they have so much at heart, self-exaltation ; but the humble are in the way to the truest glory, while they seem to fly from it. Matt. xxiii. 12. *Whoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased ; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.* He shall be high in God's estimation. God is like to put the greatest honour on such a one by the use he makes of him, and even men are commonly more disposed to respect him.

(3.) It is in its own nature a necessary introduction to the other graces and duties of Christianity. This is not a religion calculated for the proud, but the lowly.

Humility is necessary to faith. Without this we shall not be in a disposition to receive every doctrine of divine revelation as an undoubted truth upon the sole testimony of God, and to silence our objections by that only authority. Pride and self-sufficiency was the principal reason why *Christ crucified* was of old to the Jews a *stumbling-block*, and to the Greeks *foolishness*.

It is equally necessary to obedience. A proud unbroken heart sets up for itself, and at least

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practically says, *Who is the Lord over me?* It must therefore be first humbled, before the language of it will be, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.

Without this frame we shall not value a saviour, so as to receive him and make use of him as he is offered in the Gospel. We shall not be fond of being beholden to another for our pardon and acceptance with God, till we have an abasing sense of our own guilty and miserable condition. *The whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick,* Luke v. 31. As long as men think that they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, they will pay little regard to Christ's counsel, to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they may be rich; and white raiment that they may be clothed, Rev. iii. 17, 18. This was the foundation of the difference of behaviour between the pharisee and the publican: The pharisee trusted in himself that he was righteous and despised others; and so came to God with an arrogant self-sufficiency: but the publican had a lively sense of his own sinfulness and unworthiness; and therefore came in the most humble manner, and with the most humble request, *God be merciful to me a sinner,* Luke xviii. 9—13.

Without an humble spirit we shall not prize the grace of the Holy Spirit, nor live in constant dependance on his aids: unless we are sensible of the deceitfulness and badness of our

own hearts, and of our own insufficiency for that which is good.

Without Humility we cannot persevere in our adherence to Christ; but shall be ready to take offence, when we are called out to trials and exercises. The proud mind, that is full of itself, is not easily content to bear reproaches; to be meanly thought of by others; to be exposed to the trial of cruel mockings; to sacrifice reputation, and honour, and ease, and every valuable outward comfort, to the pleasing of God, and the securing of a good conscience. But Humility will go a great way to make all these things fit light. That will form our souls to a placid resignation to the will of God, as wiser and fitter to determine our lot than ourselves. We shall not brook so ill the reflections of other people, when we have a just sense of much amiss in us. We shall not think much of any ill usage we meet with by the way, or think we have any reason to complain; when we are conscious that we deserve much worse, that we are less than the least of the mercies we enjoy; and especially that the heavenly reward, as it is unspeakably great, so is it altogether undeserved. And humble apprehensions of ourselves compared with other people, will go a great way towards silencing complaints, when we consider what others have undergone, who are much more wise, and holy, and useful than we.

Without this grace we shall be indisposed to receive that assistance from other men in the way to heaven, which we might obtain. Those
who

who are wise in their own conceit, despise the admonitions of their pious parents and friends, are impatient of reproof, are above ministerial instructions; and for want of a modest apprehension of their own defects, suppose themselves too great proficient in knowledge to learn, or in goodness to improve.

And lastly, without this lowly disposition we cannot possibly perform that compass of duty to our fellow creatures, which makes so great a part of true Christianity. A haughty mind will ill comport with *becoming all things to all men, that we may gain some; with pleasing our neighbour for his good to edification; with bearing all things; with the forgiveness of injuries; with condescension to the weaknesses and humours of other men, and to the meanest offices, when we can have hope of doing them good thereby.*

So evident is it, that Humility is a grace of the first rank in Christianity.

2. It is this grace which adorns every other virtue, and recommends religion to every beholder. If all the characters mentioned in that rule of conduct, which the apostle lays down in Phil. iv. 8. can be said to meet in any one grace, it is in Humility. *Whatsoever things are true, have a just foundation in the reason of things, whatsoever things are honest, or honourable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* Our light cannot more effectually shine before

fore men, than by not affecting to have it shine, that is by Humility. Hence St. Peter calls us to *be clothed with Humility*, 1 Pet. v. 5. And St. Paul, in the text, to *put it on* as an ornament. It casts a lustre even upon attainments comparatively low; while pride eclipses the beauty of great and distinguishing excellencies. It conciliates esteem from all, even from the proud themselves, who value that in others which they care not to practise in their own case. And therefore, as we are concerned to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*, and to take care that *our good be not evil spoken of*; it concerns us to live in the exercise of Humility, without which all the train of Christian graces beside would suffer in their amiableness, and their use for the glory of God.

3. Humility is eminently recommended to us by the example of the author and finisher of our faith. There is hardly any one part of the amiable character of Christ, of which the gospel-history gives us more instances, than of his humbleness of mind; nor any, in which he is more frequently and expressly proposed to us for a pattern. For instance,

(1.) His assuming the human nature was the highest instance of humiliation that ever was or could be given. *That the word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, should consent to be made flesh.* Though he was no lower a person than God *blessed for evermore*; yet he vouchsafed to descend from the habitation of his holiness and glory, to lay aside in appearance his divine character, and all that

visible

visible glory which had been used to attend him in his manifestations under the Old Testament; and was content to take upon him the nature, the state, and the sinless infirmities of mankind; to be *made of a woman, made under the law*. This was an instance of Humility, of which none but himself was capable; which indeed is so far above our direct imitation in the letter of it, that the manner of it exceeds our comprehension. And yet it is a very proper argument to inculcate upon us Humility in our measure, and with that view is proposed to us by the apostle, in Phil. ii. He had among other things exhorted to *lowliness of mind*, ver. 3. and adds, ver. 5. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*. How was such a temper shewn by Christ? It follows, *Who being in the form of God, [being truly God, or, having been used to appear under the Old Testament with a godlike glory, which he would not have been suffered to do, had he not been true God] thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, [emptied himself, or, as the same word is rendered, 1 Cor. ix. 15. made void his glorying, as to the outward manifestation of his glory] and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. Though he was rich, with the riches of the godhead, yet for our sakes, out of his abundant grace to us, he became poor, 2 Cor. viii. 9. But how should the same mind be in us, which was thus expressed by the eternal Son of God? We should never then think much of any instance of self-abasement suitable to our measure*

measure, to which we can be called for serving a valuable end; and be always sensible, that it can never come up to this amazing condescension of the Son of God.

(2.) When he appeared in the world in the human nature, he affected not worldly glory and honour. He contented not himself merely to lay aside the glory of heaven, and his glorious appearance by the Shekinah, and to enter upon the condition of mortal man, which at the best is unspeakably low and mean in comparison of the divine glory; but he appeared in the world with many additional circumstances of meanness. He descended from a family which was then very obscure, which had lost the antient dignity and grandeur of his father David. Mary his mother was a woman in a low condition; capable of giving the Lord of glory but very poor entertainment at his coming into the world; and therefore at his birth, *she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn*; Luke ii. 7. There were no servile attendants, no sumptuous preparations made for his nativity; but as in his after-life, so now he had scarce *a place where to lay his head*. The shepherds could never have divined without the instruction of an angel, that here, and in this manner, was *born a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord*, ver. 8—11. And the wise men of the East must be under a divine conduct, to find the king of the Jews in such a despicable place. While he was growing up, he lived with his reputed father, a carpenter;

penter; and thence was stiled *the carpenter's son*. Matt. xiii. 55. When he entered upon his public ministry, the generality of those whom he chose for his disciples and followers, were poor fishermen, or men of a like condition. He made no outward figure, and mainly sojourned in places of small note. He had no wealth, or secular honour; not so much as a settled habitation or certain provision. He contemned worldly honours, when they were offered him; as when the people would have taken him by force, and made him a king. He cheerfully underwent poverty and contempt and ill usage of various kinds, before he submitted to the last act of his humiliation, to be *obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*.

Now surely all this was to recommend Humility to us: to teach his disciples not to seek high things for themselves, nor to value themselves much upon a large share of worldly enjoyments. If he had thought that outward shew and grandeur would have served better those ends, for which he came into the world; he could easily have secured to himself all the riches of the earth, and have appeared with a pomp far superior to the mistaken apprehension of the Jews concerning their Messiah. But he rather chose to teach his disciples Humility, and self-denial, and mortification, by his own voluntary entrance upon the stage of life, and passing over it to the end, in a low condition.

(3.) As man, he was a pattern of great Humility toward God. He *sought not his own glory,*

glory, but *the glory of him that sent him*, John viii. 50. chap. vii. 18. This was his professed aim through his course on earth, and conspicuous in the course of his words and actions. Hence as man, he disclaimed any pretensions to such knowledge as was above the capacity of his human nature, or his attainment at that time, Mark xiii. 32. And when one, who took him for no more than a man, seemed to ascribe goodness to him in too exalted a sense for a creature; he expostulates with him about it, and asserts the perfections of Godhead to be so peculiar, that even those wherein creatures may bear the divine image do yet belong to God in such a manner as they can belong to none else: *Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God*; Matt. xix. 17. He ascribed the glory of his works to his Father. He was entirely obedient to his commands, for what he should say and do in the minutest circumstances, and for the hardest services. He cheerfully submitted to his will in the severest sufferings; and paid him all religious homage in acts of worship.

(4.) He was a pattern of the greatest Humility to mankind.

He was ready to condescend to the meanest in order to their good. Most of the miracles he performed, were wrought upon those who were of a low condition. When a man of figure besought him to heal his servant, he was ready to do that kind office for him, as if it had been the master himself, Matt. viii. 6, &c. He stood still in the way to regard the cry of a poor beggar,

beggar, as much as if he had been a man of the greatest consideration, when the multitude would fain have silenced him, Mark x. 46, &c. and esteemed it as *his meat and drink* to maintain a conversation with the poor woman of Samaria, in order to her soul's advantage, though *his disciples marvelled that he talked with her*, John iv. 27. He overlooked not even little children; but called his followers to learn good instructions from them, and to be very tender of them: Matt. xviil. 1—10. In the next chapter we find him taking them up in his arms and blessing them; and when his disciples rebuked those who brought them to Christ, he would have them suffered to come to him; chap. xix. 13, 14.

He was willing to stoop to the meanest offices for the meanest persons. He freely touched a poor man, who was over-spread with a leprosy, in order to his cure, though it was naturally ungrateful, and legally unclean, Mark i. 41. And particularly recommends the greatest condescensions to his disciples, by using an emblematick action for that purpose, of washing their feet, John xiii. 5, &c. Thus he made it evident in his whole conduct, that *he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister*, Mat. xx. 28. And yet, which was another instance of Humility,

He was not above receiving and acknowledging the respect shewn him by the meanest. He accepted the charitable contributions of some good women, who *ministered unto him of their substance*, Luke viii. 3. He takes notice
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of the honest and well-meant Hosannahs paid him by children, Matt. xxi. 15. And the more hearty mark of respect shewn him by the woman who poured ointment on his head, as he sat at meat, he has put an everlasting mark of honour upon, Matt. xxvi. 13.

Now how forcible an engagement should this be to all who profess a relation to him, to imitate him in a virtue, which made so great a part of the character of their master? To *learn of him, who was lowly of heart*, Matt. xi. 29.

4. Humility is a grace which will go along with us to heaven. The only inhabitants of that world, who were ever lifted up with pride, have been long ago cast down from thence to hell. The Seraphims cover their feet in presence of the divine majesty, magnify him with incessant adorations, and abase themselves continually before him, Isa. vi. 2, 3. The representations given us of the glorious company above in the New-Testament, bespeak the same lowliness of mind before God. *The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne*; Rev. iv. 10. And to the same purpose, chap. v. 10. And as a farther description of the Humility of their adoration, they are said to *fall before the throne on their faces*, chap. vii. 11. and chap. xi. 16. God in that world is all in all; and every blessed spirit there, up to the most exalted celestial mind, maintains the sense of infinite distance, in the midst of the most familiar and satisfying approaches; and receives the bounties of

of the great Creator, *crying, grace, grace.* We have a specimen of the humble temper attending saints to the judgment-day, in the representation of it given by our Saviour, Matt. xxv. When the judge will take notice of their acts of charity, and put the most kind and gracious construction upon them that can be, as done to himself in his members: they are represented as having so low an opinion of their goodness, that they can hardly think themselves to deserve the commendation: *Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? &c.* While the sinner is described as carrying his fond conceit to the bar, and hardly convinced of the neglects charged upon him by his judge: *When saw we thee an hungred, &c. and did not minister unto thee?* We may say indeed in commendation of Humility, beyond many other graces, that it is greater and more excellent than they, for the same reason that love is preferred by the apostle to *faith and hope*, because it *never faileth*, 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 13.

I N F E R E N C E S.

i. Those who are destitute of this grace, whatever profession they have made of christianity, have in truth the rudiments of it yet to learn. If they have been soaring upward to heaven itself in the sublimest speculations; if they have built up their hopes to the greatest height upon other grounds, without laying this at the foundation; they must be content to come down again to learn this lesson, which

enters into the elements of Christ's religion. A proud Christian is a contradictory character; as much as it would be to say, a wicked saint. The whole Gospel, in its precepts, its great example, its glorious prospects, tends to humble the pride of man: And therefore, whoever will come after Christ, must in this respect deny himself.

2. We should look principally to the temper of our spirits, to judge of our Humility. We may have the character of humble people with men from a modest outside, and negligence of garb, a condescending carriage, lowly speeches; while the God that searches the heart, may see pride reigning there under these fair disguises, and that all such plausible appearances are only intended to gratify and support a haughty and over-bearing disposition. Humbleness of mind makes the Christian temper; and the poor in spirit are the heirs of the promise.

3. No single branch of goodness deserves more of our attention, in order to judge of the improving or declining state of our souls, than this of Humility. If we grow in knowledge, and are puffed up along with it, we lose more in goodness, than we gain in profitable furniture. If we improve in other excellencies, but out-strip that improvement in the conceit we have of ourselves; we only make those things nothing in the sight of God, which would otherwise be valuable. This is a dead fly, that will spoil the whole box of ointment. Whether we advance in the right knowledge of God or ourselves, it cannot fail to make us sensible

sensible of our defects, and humble in the sense of them. A man that improves in learning, sees more defects in his attainments, when he hath made a good progress, than he did at setting out : he discerns a larger field of knowledge before him, after all his advances, than he had any notion of, when he first turned his thoughts that way. So it is with a lively Christian; he sees so much before him, that he *forgets the things that are behind, and reaches forth unto those that are before, still pressing toward the mark*; Phil. iii. 13, 14. This was Paul's character, when he was most fixedly set in heaven's way; and it will be the character of any Christian, when he is ripening fastest for the heavenly harvest.

S E R M O N III.

Purity.

By the Rev. Mr. EVANS.

PSAL. li. 10. the former part.

Create in me a clean Heart, O God.

ONE principal concern we have about ourselves, after the determination of the preference due to our souls above our bodies, is to regulate the appetites and passions we have by occasion of the body, conformable to the interests of the soul, and the precepts of God concerning them. A *clean Heart*, which is here prayed for, is one of the first things of that kind, which should come into our consideration.

This is sometimes taken in so extensive a sense, as to signify holiness in general, in opposition to all sin, which is often in the Scripture style represented as the defilement of the soul. In other places it is to be understood in
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a more confined sense, for the temper directly opposed to criminal sensualities, or the ascendant of irregular appetites; to that which eminently bears the name of *filthiness of the flesh*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. and especially to the violations of the seventh commandment. Thus we are to understand the *clean Heart* in the text.

The Psalmist had fallen into the horrible sin of adultery; and being awakened to repentance upon the message brought him by Nathan the prophet, he composed this Psalm: wherein, besides very suitable abasing confessions of his sin, he earnestly solicits for pardoning mercy, to remove his guilt; for sanctifying grace, to take away the stain itself, with which such heinous offences had polluted his soul; and for a recovery of the comfortable sense of both in his own conscience. The passage now proposed to consideration, is among the expressions wherein he prays for sanctification. He had not been an utter stranger to this blessing till now; but eminent falls introduce such a general and surprizing disorder into the soul, that a man has in a sort his work in religion to begin a-new. Therefore Peter's recovery after his scandalous denial of his master is spoken of, as if it was a second conversion. *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*, Luke xxii. 32. So the heinous sin of David had poisoned his soul afresh with impure thoughts and irregular inclinations, in such a manner, that he saw occasion to apply again for God's creating power, to recover him to a clean heart, as if he had never had one.

In considering this part of a good spirit, I would, I. Shew what is included in Purity or cleanness of heart, as it stands opposed to fleshly lusts and sensual practices. II. Point at some of the obligations we are under, to seek after and cultivate such a temper of soul.

I. I would enquire into the meaning of a *clean heart*, or the proper ingredients and expressions of such a temper of soul.

And you cannot but discern, that something more is intended by it than a bare abstinence from the outward and gross acts of criminal sensuality. Would to God, that none of these shewed their face in a Christian land; that there was no reason to lament many open instances of impurity and lewdness, which hardly shun the light. If the visible reformation of manners was advanced, much dishonour and provocation to the blessed God, and grief to the hearts of good men, would be prevented, and the contagion of vice would not spread as it does. But though the works of the flesh are undeniable evidences of an impure heart; yet other restraints may prevent outward enormities, where the heart is not truly purified. Men may be like *whited sepulchres, which appear beautiful outward, but within are full of dead mens bones, and of all uncleanness*; Matt. xxiii. 27.

That which the Psalmist had in his desire, and which every Christian should have in his, is, that the matter may be carried much farther, into the temper of the soul; that there may be not only *clean hands*, but a *pure heart* also,

also, which are both united in the character of a citizen of Zion, Psal. xxiv. 4. And such a purified heart will import such things as these:

1. A fixed habitual abhorrence of all forbidden indulgencies of the flesh. Since human nature is corrupted, and bodily appetite has lost the bridle of reason and religion; the affections are become impetuous toward sensual gratifications; the hearts of sinners, or their love and liking, are on that side. Or if the remains of natural conscience are so strong, and the bias of fear, and of shame in reference to other people, so far prevail, as to restrain from open pollutions; yet they content themselves with this, though all the while a rooted aversion to all fleshly lusts upon the principles of religion and duty is wanting. Here is the turning, discriminating point in God's account, between a clean and an impure heart. A man, whose heart is purified, looks upon sensualities as hateful to God, as warring against his soul; and therefore has a fixed detestation of them, as enemies to God, and to his own best interests. His fear of God, and his love to him, lead him thus to hate evil, Prov. viii. 13. Psal. xcvi. 10. This fixed bent of heart against impurity, is that which principally constitutes a clean heart; and from this all the other fruits and expressions of such a temper will proceed.

2. All past impurities, either of heart or life, will be reflected on with shame and sorrow, where there is a clean heart. It is true, that which hath been done, cannot be recalled, so

as that it should cease to be fact. But when any sin is recalled to remembrance with unfeigned repentance, the heart is in a gospel sense purified from the stain of that sin.

There are too many who *glory in their shame*, Phil. iii. 19. They not only give a loose to their vicious inclinations, but think of them with pleasure afterwards, pride themselves in them, and speak of them with a relish. They are *not ashamed, when they have committed abominations; neither can they blush*, Jer. vi. 15. You may too often meet with such old offenders, that when they are unable, by reason of the decays of age, any longer to practise the excesses of their youthful days; yet, instead of penitential tears and deep humiliation for their former crimes, call them to remembrance with an impudent pleasure, boast of them as mighty achievements, and seem sorry for nothing so much as that they can practise them no longer. A spectacle, that strikes every serious mind with horror! God alludes to this in his charge against Israel, Ezek. xxiii. 19. *She multiplied her whoredoms, in calling to remembrance the days of her youth, wherein she had played the harlot in the land of Egypt.* God is there censuring the people of Israel for their spiritual whoredom or idolatry; that they provoked God afresh by looking back with delight upon the idolatries practised by their ancestors in the early days of their state: but this is expressed by an allusion to persons acting over again their youthful sins with pleasure upon the stage of their imagination, and so renewing their offences in God's account.

account. Others think of their former offences with a cold indifference; or if there is any remorse, it is rather for the prejudice which they may have done to their health, or estate, or reputation, than from a sense of their sin against God. The sin of such people remains, both in the book of God to their condemnation, and in the dominion of it in their own souls.

But it is the mark of a clean heart, to remember any past impurities with godly sorrow and a deep contrition of soul. He *acknowledgeth his transgression, and his sin is ever before him*, Psal. li. 3. Every review opens the springs of penitential grief; and while he feels some kindly softnings, yet, like the Psalmist in the text, he is solicitous for farther cleansing, for a heart still more purged from his old sins. Thus the frame of Ephraim is described, Jer. xxxi. 19. *I was ashamed, yea even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.* The hopes of pardoning mercy will not extinguish, but excite genuine repentance, according to God's design in the discovery of it, Ezek. xvi. 63. *that thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee.* Every new benefit conferred by a reconciled God, will heighten the displeasure of a clean heart at past offences, Ezek. xx. 42, 43. *I will bring you into the land of Israel, [out of your captivity in Babylon] and there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled, and ye shall loth yourselves in your own sight, for all your evils which ye have committed.* This is a
happy

happy indication of the temper prayed for in the text.

3. A clean heart imports, that the heart is actually freed in a good measure from impure thoughts and irregular desires ; or at least that they are not entertained with pleasure and delight.

The refining and regulation of the fancy and imagination, is a considerable branch of the purification of the heart ; that vicious thoughts come not so often and so easily upon the stage at every turn, as they are apt to do in a mind devoted to sensuality. St. Peter speaks of some, *2 Pet. ii. 14. who have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.* And the old world was so abominably corrupt, particularly in sensualities, as the context shews, that we read of them, that *every imagination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil continually, Gen. vi. 5.* Many have reason and every sober thought drowned, either in actual fleshly indulgencies, or in a succession of vile imaginations in the intervals between gross acts of sin. Every slight occasion serves to revive impure images ; and if they set themselves to think, it is to *make provision for the flesh, that they may fulfil the lusts thereof.* Their heart answers the description of Babylon, in *Rev. xviii. 2. It is the habitation of devils, the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.* A clean heart is a heart discharged from such habitual pollutions ; wherein better thoughts, such as are holy and heavenly,

venly, have place, and are entertained with true delight, as chosen and welcome guests.

I say not, that no impure or irregular thoughts do occasionally come into the minds of such who have attained to an evangelical purity. Such evil imaginations may be injected and darted by Satan into the mind of the most virtuous and good person in the world; or such events may occur in the course of things as can hardly fail to make a sudden impressi^{on} upon the fancy. But if immediate care is taken to guard against the ill tendency of such impressi^{ons}, as soon as they are discerned; if irregular inclinations, which arise from foreign influence, are disallowed and opposed as soon as born; God will not be strict to mark iniquity: nor ought persons severely to condemn themselves for these, because they are so far from discovering the dominion of impurity, that they are hardly voluntary. It is not unusual for melancholy people to torment themselves exceedingly with such thoughts; in like manner as they are afflicted with some blasphemous thoughts, which they find at times started in their minds. Whereas in both cases, the very horror and detestation with which such thoughts are entertained, might, if they could consider things justly, take off their black apprehensions of themselves because of them. For whether they are from the devil, or the product of bodily distemper, or from whatever source they arise; as long as they are rejected with abhorrence, they are more their affliction than their sin: or, if they are sinful, will be imputed

puted to the devil rather than to them. It is no more than a temptation, to have them come into their minds; if they resist the temptation, summon up their own endeavours, and call in divine help to master it; if the language of the heart be, *Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence to me*: then, instead of incurring guilt in the sight of God, by such vanquished temptations, they will be ranked by him among those who overcome.

But tho' the bare presence of such thoughts occasionally in the mind, will not argue an impure heart, as long as we are rather passive than active in them: yet if once we give our consent, as far as we take any pleasure and delight in them, or even if we can bear them with indifference; we immediately become transgressors. Then *the thought of foolishness is sin*; Prov. xxiv. 9. though it should proceed no farther than the heart. When men set themselves to ruminate upon any impure ideas that are offered to the fancy, till their affections are engaged, and unhallowed flames are kindled in their breasts; then they are defiled by them in God's account, whether they ever break out into act, or not: when *out of the heart itself*, disposed to them and siding with them, *proceed evil thoughts*, suppose of *murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witnesses, blasphemies*; such evil thoughts, when they have gained the heart, and so proceed from itself, *defile the man*; Mat. xv. 19, 20.

On the contrary, he who is of a clean heart, *bates vain thoughts*, Psal. cxix. 113. It is his
 desire,

desire, as much as possible, to guard against their entrance; but if they enter, he will not suffer them quietly to lodge with him, Jer. iv. 14. He cannot be at rest till they are dispossessed and gone.

4. A clean heart discovers itself by a cautious fear of the least degrees of impurity. While obstinate sinners make no account even of open enormities, and others think all well, if they do but abstain from them; a heart formed to real purity goes much deeper. He is careful to abstain from all appearance of evil. 1 Thess. v. 22. He dares not allow himself to go to the utmost bounds of things lawful, because he reckons himself to be then upon a precipice. If he feels any of the poison working within, it gives him a sensible concern, though no human eye can discern it.

5. A clean heart necessarily implies a careful and habitual guard against every thing which tends to pollute the mind. The pretence of a good heart in any kind is vain, unless it be kept with all diligence. Prov. iv. 23.

Where there is therefore a bent of heart to Purity, it will engage a man to maintain a guard over his senses, which provide furniture for the imagination, and are the conveyances of external temptation. The case of David, to which this Psalm refers, is a melancholy instance upon record, how dangerous it is to allow the senses an unrestrained liberty; no man indeed can fail to be sensible of this. Upon this account Solomon leaves the caution in relation to an ill woman, Prov. iv. 25. Lust
not

not after her beauty in thy heart; neither let her take thee with her eye-lids. And our Lord and Master forbids men to *look upon a woman to lust after her*, Mat. v. 28. Agreeable to the resolution which holy Job had made long before for the preservation of his own purity, Job xxxi. 1. For the same reason lascivious pictures and representations of any kind should be avoided by all who would preserve their virtue inviolate; and the reading of all impure and licentious books. Nor can I see how it consists with a just concern to keep the mind unspotted, to resort frequently to plays and masquerades; which I believe have been too successful corrupters of the present age. Most of the present plays, in their structure, and scope, and thoughts, are wickedly adapted to vitiate the fancy, and recommend a dissolution of manners; and by the beauty of action, the arts used to strike the passions, and the loose morals of the generality of those who represent them, and of the company that attend upon them, they have such a tendency to instil vice, that it is hardly possible for persons to be often present at them without weakening the guards of virtue; and great numbers of young people, who were before untainted, have been introduced this way into the school of vice, and soon have made a dismal proficiency. The practice of masquerades, which were of late revived among us, but which, thanks be to God, have been restrained by public authority, was still more dangerous than the other. In these, unnatural disguises, and an apprehension

of the concealment of character, on the one hand, expose to such attacks upon virtue, as would scarce otherwise be attempted; and, on the other hand, abate those restraints of modesty and decorum, which providence often makes use of to preserve people from notorious impurities, who have not the best principle, of the fear and love of God, for their security. Would to God that all who have taken Christ for their Master, would maintain such a sense of the infirmity of human nature, as to keep at the remotest distance from the known incentives to sensuality: and that they would take care also, that young people under their charge may be fortified by all the prudential methods they can use, against frequenting those nurseries of vice.

All loose and vicious company will be avoided as much as may be by those who have a clean heart; such company, as by their practice and converse evidently shew the impurity of their own hearts. This we are cautioned against, 1 Corinth. v. 11. and the reason is evident; *Evil communication corrupts good manners.* This danger seems to be intimated in the manner of expression used in Jude 22. *Others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire.* Be not wanting in your best endeavours for the recovery even of profligate and accustomed sinners, as you have opportunity for it; but then let your attempts to reform them be attended with fear, lest you should receive any infection from them: and therefore the apostle adds; *hating even the garment spotted with the flesh:* set about their reformation, with
a lively

a lively apprehension of the danger of such society, that it is hard even to touch pitch and not be defiled; and therefore be sure that you keep up a fixed abhorrence of their sin, while you apply yourselves to reclaim them.

Intemperance will be carefully avoided by those who have an earnest concern to maintain their purity: not only because of the sinfulness of it in itself; but because it lays a man open to many other sins, and particularly to impurities. Therefore the apostle joins a caution against both of these together, Rom. xiii. 13. *Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness*: not only as each of these, separately considered, is opposite to christian conversation; but also as rioting and drunkenness is so often the introduction to chambering and wantonness.

And to advance a step farther; a heart formed to the sincere love of Purity, will not think much to restrain himself in some things which may be lawful in themselves, and safe to many others, if he finds by experience that they ordinarily prove occasions of sin to him. Tho' he will not censure others, where the law of God does not censure them; yet he will make it an ordinary rule to himself, to forbear as far as he can, that which seldom fails to be a temptation to him.

II. I proceed to represent the obligations that lie upon us to seek after such a Purity of heart.

1. A ruling inclination to sensuality is directly contrary to the Purity and holiness of the
the

the divine nature. *God is a Spirit.* He has made us indeed to consist of flesh and spirit: but if we give an unbridled loose to fleshly appetite, instead of keeping the body under the dominion of the higher faculties, we shall abandon all that wherein we are capable of bearing the image of God, and *become like the beasts that perish.* And this cannot be done by us without the guilt of debasing our natures, when God had made us capable of nobler pursuits, and better relishes. It is observable, that in three several places where sin is spoken of as *against God*, reference is had to the sin of uncleanness. So it was in Joseph's case, when he overcame the temptation with this thought; *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. David's confession in this Psalm had the same special evil in view, ver. 4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.* And the prodigal son is represented to have *wasted his substance with riotous living*, Luke xv. 13. and in another verse, to have *devoured his living with harlots*, ver. 30. and without doubt he had that as much as any other sin in his eye, when he resolved to return to his father with this penitent acknowledgment, ver. 18, 19. *I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Thus the Scripture leads us to consider this sin as eminently against God. How much are we obliged therefore to cultivate Purity? and especially Purity of heart, since properly we

can bear the image of God only in our spirits.

2. Sensuality has a special tendency to extinguish the light of reason, and to unfit for any thing spiritual and sacred. *Whoredom and wine, and new wine, take away the heart;* Hos. iv. 11. Such criminal indulgences are both the effects of great blindness, and the means of increasing it, Eph. iv. 18, 19. No sort of sin commonly hardens the heart to a greater degree : of which David was a melancholy instance; he seems not to have been recovered to a penitent sense of his fall, till he received a message from God by Nathan the prophet; and that was not till after the birth of the child. Nothing makes the mind more averse to sacred exercises, or disposes it more for the serious and spiritual performance of them. Hence the deluded youth, who gives himself up to sensualities, is described when he comes to mourn at last, as reviewing this, among other pernicious effects of his evil practices, Prov. v. 14. *I was almost in all evil, in the midst of the congregation and assembly.* His vices had so leavened his mind, that his thoughts were full of them, even when he appeared in worshipping assemblies.

3. Sensuality is most contrary to the design and engagements of christianity. Our blessed Lord and Master inculcated the strictest Purity upon all his disciples; not only an abstinence from the gross outward acts of uncleanness, but from polluting thoughts and desires.

fires. To this purpose he vindicates the spiritual intention of the seventh commandment, in Matt. v. 27 — 30. and his practice kept at the remotest distance from every thing that had an impure aspect. His intention in giving himself for us, is declared to be *to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify to himself a peculiar people*, Tit. ii. 14. We are to consider *our old man as crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*; Rom. vi. 6. *Sin should not therefore reign in our mortal body, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof*, ver. 12. i. e. A sinful inclination of mind to the indulgence of bodily lust, should not be suffered to prevail in us. So, when the apostle puts the *Thessalonians* in mind *what commandments* he and his fellow-servants in the gospel had given them by the Lord Jesus, i. e. by his authority, and under the direction of his Spirit; he presses this as a matter of special obligation on Christians, 1. Theff. iv. 2--5. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God.* When Christ was ascended into heaven, he puts a most particular mark of his abhorrence upon the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitans; and at the same time of his approbation on those Christians who abhorred them, Rev. ii. 6, 15. Those Nicolaitans were a set of vile and filthy hereticks at the beginning

of christianity, who taught doctrines of the utmost licentiousness, while they disgraced the Christian name by wearing it; and their practices were as leud as their principles. The Holy Jesus by a message from heaven takes care to stigmatize these filthy dreamers, and to animate his disciples to a rooted hatred of every impure principle and practice.

The apostle in several places urges this Purity upon Christians from another argument, their participation of the Holy Spirit of God. *They are the temple of God, by the Spirit of God dwelling in them; and therefore they might be assured, that if any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. And elsewhere, that they are the members of Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost: Shall I then (says he) take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. chap. vi. 15, 19.* Whatever others do, a Christian who professes to be united to Christ by his Holy Spirit, should abhor the thought of foolishness.

4. The blessed hope with which christianity inspires us, lays us under a forcible engagement to present Purity.

Those of the contrary temper, are absolutely excluded, by the express declarations of the Gospel, from the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. *Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, &c. shall inherit the kingdom of God. Heb. xiii. 4. Whore-mongers*

mongers and adulterers God will judge. And such are reckoned up among those who shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, Rev. xxi. 8. and who are without the heavenly Jerusalem, chap. xxxii.

14, 15. On the contrary, the promise of the future blessedness is most plainly made to the pure in heart, Matt. v. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. And this very

representation of the heavenly felicity, that it principally consists in the sight and fruition of a holy God, shews that his constitution limiting that happiness to the pure in heart, is founded in the nature and reason of things. We cannot

relish it, or be made happy by it, any more than be allowed to share in it, without a heart refined from the dregs of sensuality. Saints

themselves have but an imperfect relish for it here, since they are not divested of all remains of sensual inclinations: but because they will

be made perfectly righteous in the future state, and raised to their full resemblance of God in spirituality, therefore the enjoyment of him

then will give them full satisfaction. So the Psalmist joins these circumstances together in his prospect of the other life, Psal. xvii. 15.

As for me, I will (or shall) behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness. In the same manner St. John

speaks of our future condition, 1 John iii. 2. We know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. But

observe how thereupon he infers the necessity

of present aspirings and endeavours after a resemblance of divine Purity, in all the expectants of heaven, ver. 3. *And every man, that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure; i. e.* Every man, who makes heaven his hope and real desire in this justest view of it, as a state of likeness to God, and of the nearest enjoyment of him; cannot fail to have a prevailing and a growing relish for Purity now.

Let us all then, by way of application, seriously enquire what the temper of our own souls is in reference to the subject we are upon. The vast moment and importance of it appears from what has been last offered. And upon the enquiry, we shall either see reason to judge that an impure spirit prevails in us; or to hope that our hearts are in a good measure made clean: and even then, we shall hardly fail to discern great defects in our purification in a higher or lower degree.

If you see reason but to fear that an impure spirit hath the dominion; seriously consider what a holy God must judge of you: he can look upon you no otherwise than as altogether alienated from him, and from the life of God; of a temper most opposite to his nature and will. And can you think that for these things he will not bring you into judgment? That he will not call his reasonable creature to a severe account for so base a prostitution of his noble powers? Especially a reasonable creature under the Gospel, which contains the strongest en-

engagements, and proposes the most effectual assistance for recovering impure souls? Can you entertain the least hope of standing in the judgment, when you are to be judged by this Gospel? And yet, how far soever your impurities have proceeded, if you are awakened to a serious conviction of your sin and danger, despair not either of a cure or of a pardon, if you take the course prescribed in the Gospel. It is left upon record, for encouragement to the chief of sinners, when they are awakened; that the apostle, after he had reckoned up some of the grossest sensualities, and declared that they would certainly exclude from the kingdom of God; yet plainly signifies, that he only means this without repentance; and immediately gives instances of the effectual recovery even of such offenders, 1 Cor. vi.

11. Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Here is a sufficient provision for all the washing that even you need, for your sanctification by the grace of the Holy Spirit, and for your justification and pardon thro' the blood of Christ. Here were souls sunk into the lowest impurity, but effectually relieved in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God: and these will be as effectual for your relief. But what course must be taken in order to your being washed by these means? Apply to God by earnest prayer. The text directs you to go to God, and say,

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Go with the humble serious cry of the publican, God be merciful unto me a sinner, Luke xviii. 13. Go with the prodigal son, acknowledge your guilt and unworthiness, and say, Make me as one of thy hired servants, Luke xv. 18, 19. And in dependance on the grace which God has so many ways encouraged you to ask, set yourselves to break off your sins by repentance: Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Awake from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light; Eph. v. 14.

If you can justly hope, that purification is begun in heart and life; adore divine grace, which has made you to differ, and has plucked you as brands out of the burning. If, by God's blessing upon a pious education, you have grown to a sincere abhorrence of impurity, without any remarkable sallies of youth by the way; you have particular reason to be thankful for this, as it has prevented many miseries to soul and body in this life, which give no small uneasiness to some other converts. If you are recovered from a sensual course; yet the happy change of your circumstances should greatly affect you, while you see so many around you proceed in the way to destruction to their lives end. Aspire after greater and higher measures of Purity, still endeavouring farther to *cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.* And remember, that the hopes you have of your present state should not make you secure; but *watch and*

and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The case in the text, of a man so eminently good before, is a standing admonition against security.

If you have fallen into any sensualities since you came to the knowledge of the truth, David's example in this Psalm will give you proper directions of conduct. There must be particular and solemn repentance answerable to the aggravating circumstances which attend such a sin in you. You should not be easy, till at least you recover the ground you have lost, both in your holiness and your comfort: and if you have *caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, you have all the reason in the world to submit, as David did, to any penal rebukes of God for it, in any way which he takes to vindicate his own honour; and to do all you can for the same purpose, by a repentance as public as your offences.

And as the best have reason to own the imperfections of their Purity in the present state, though they are *kept from the greater transgressions*; so they have reason to *walk humbly with God*, daily to review and make up their accounts with him, to be always upon their guard against greater offences; and while they dwell in the body, to pursue the work of *mortifying the deeds of it*.

To close all: The young have peculiar reason to reckon this subject to concern them. The evils I am cautioning against, are by way of eminency *youthful lusts*. That age of life

is more than any other addicted to impurities; and therefore the guard should be answerable. On the other hand, it may truly be said to be a crime more aggravated in those advanced in years, if they should retain the same vicious turn of mind; and it is possible, that they may have a most impure heart, even when they have outlived the serviceableness of their bodies to the dictates of a carnal mind. Young and old are concerned in this subject, and should often make this prayer, *Create in me a clean heart, O God.*

S E R M O N IV.

Of the Circumcision of the Heart.

By Archbishop SHARP.

Rom. ii. 28, 29.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

FOR the understanding the sense of these words, and what use we are to make of them, we must look back to what the apostle has been discoursing in this and the former chapter. His design in both these chapters, is to set forth the great degeneracy and corruption that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, lay in, both as to their manners and principles; and consequently the necessity of God's setting on foot a new dispensation, in order to the reformation and salvation of men, and that was the

the faith of Jesus Christ, without which it was impossible, either for Jew or Gentile, to plead a title to God's mercy.

He begins with the Gentiles, and shews largely how horribly blind and ignorant they were in the matters of God; how false and superstitious their religion and worship; and to what an height of wickedness and impiety, as to their practices, they were arrived, so that they were altogether inexcusable before God.

But it might be said, the Jews were not in this deplorable condition: they were not strangers to the true God, nor ignorant of his worship. God had made known his will to them by a revelation from heaven, and had adopted them for his own children. And they bore the mark of their being in covenant with him in their very flesh, besides abundance of other advantages that they had above all the world. So that they had great reason to believe themselves safe, whatever became of the Gentiles. Those poor people indeed they owned to be in a wretched state; but as for themselves, who were the people of God, and were able to teach his will to all the rest of the world, they sure could not be in danger of miscarrying.

This was the plea that the Jews made for themselves, and it is handsomely represented by St. Paul, in the 17th verse of this second chapter, where he begins to apply his discourse to them.

Behold, says he, thou art called a Jew, and reatest in the law, and makest thy boast of God; and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and

and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light to them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of the simple, having the platform of truth, and knowledge of the law, ver. 18, 19, 20. All this the Jews said of themselves: and St. Paul doth not deny but that they might say it, both with truth and reason. But what then? Were they therefore in a better condition, as to their spiritual everlasting state, than those poor heathens whom they so much despised? No; he tells them plainly, in no wise, but rather far more inexcusable, inasmuch as they did not make a right use of this light and knowledge that God had afforded them above all other nations. This law, that they so much gloried in, had no influence upon their hearts and lives. They lived as lawlessly as if God had never revealed his will to them. Their practices were quite contradictory to their pretences and profession; and this their own consciences could not but reproach them with, and condemn them for. For what greater reproach can there be to a man, or what can more aggravate his guilt, than for him to pretend to be able to teach others, and yet not to teach himself? To preach that a man should not steal, and yet to steal himself? To abhor idols and all idolatrous worship, and yet to be guilty of as great impiety against God another way, viz. committing of sacrilege? To make his boast of the law, and yet to dishonour God; nay, and to make his name blasphemed among the very Gentiles, (ver. 21, 22, 23, 24,) by his open and scandalous violations of that law? And yet this was the case of the
Jews,

Jews, as St. Paul chargeth it upon them in the 2d verse of this chapter, and the four following.

And then, as for the business of Circumcision, which they laid so mighty a stress upon, as that which was the seal of their covenant with God, and that which entitled them to his mercies and favour, he tells them in the 25th verse, that *their Circumcision would indeed profit them if they kept the law; but if they were transgressors of the law, their Circumcision was made uncircumcision*; that is to say, that Circumcision was indeed a sacrament instituted by God for the entering that people into covenant with him, and for the sealing and conveying the benefits made over by that covenant to all those that were circumcised: but then it was upon this supposition, upon this condition, that those who were so circumcised, did perform the terms which that covenant required of them; that is to say, did live in the practice of inward purity and holiness, and obedience to God's commandments, which were the things signified by Circumcision. But if they did not this, they were so far from reaping any spiritual benefits by their Circumcision, that they had as good not have been circumcised at all (that is the meaning of his phrase of *their Circumcision being made uncircumcision*, ver. 25.) Nay, as he goes on in the next verse, (26.) the Heathens themselves, if they lived better than the Jews, if they were more pure and holy, (27.) and more obedient to the laws of God written in their Hearts, than the Jews were, though they had no Circumcision

cumcision in their flesh, yet were they, in a true sense, more properly Jews, that is to say, more truly children of Abraham, and entitled to the promises of God, and the benefits of the covenant made with him, than the carnal Jews, who had the mark of Circumcision upon them. For as he concludes in the words of my text, *He is not a Jew, who is one outwardly; neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the Heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God,* ver. 28, 29. As if he had said, Every one that is born a Jew, and is circumcised; and, as far as the outward characters and badges of Judaism go, can make a fair title to the promises of God, is not therefore a true Jew; is not therefore a son of Abraham, to whom the benefits of God's covenant do appertain; nor is that the true available Circumcision, which is external, that mark which is imprinted on the flesh: but he is the Jew, the Israelite indeed, the true child of Abraham, who shall be accepted of God, though he be not so by birth; who, in the purity and integrity of his Heart, yields obedience to those eternal and substantial laws of holiness and righteousness which God gave to the Jews: and the true Circumcision, that will stand one in stead, is that of him who cuts off all superfluities and pollutions that are spiritual; who hath that law of righteousness, of which Circumcision is the sign and seal, imprinted on his inner man, his soul and spirit: not he who hath obeyed it in the letter
only,

only, by being circumcised outwardly in his flesh. In a word, the true Israelite is one, *whose praise is not of men, but of God*; who aims at more in his profession of religion, than barely the entitling himself to the favour, and countenance, and outward privileges which that profession may procure him among men; for he makes it his main business to approve himself to God, by a serious endeavour in thought, and word, and deed, to observe his holy commandments.

Thus I have given you a plain account of St. Paul's discourse in this chapter, and of the sense and meaning of the words of my text.

But it may be said, What doth all this concern us? We are neither Jews nor Gentiles, but Christians, and therefore have nothing to do with what the apostle here discourseth concerning them.

I answer, though the apostle here particularly addresseth his discourse to the Jews, yet the reason of his words is of eternal truth in all religions, and doth concern us as well as them. For do but change the word Jew in the text into that of Christian, and the term of Circumcision into that of Baptism, and those other outward duties and privileges which we (and yet not without great reason) do set so high a value upon, and the text will fit us at this day, as well as those persons to whom St. Paul did immediately direct his discourse. The truth is, it is to be feared, that many of us Christians do approach too near to the Jews of that time in our notions of religion, and think our-
selves

selves true disciples of Christ, and to have a right to all the promises of the Gospel upon the same, or no better grounds, than those Jews that St. Paul here disputes against, thought themselves the children of Abraham, and entitled to all the benefits of that covenant which was made with him. For as they believed themselves secure of God's favour and acceptance, merely because they were Jews outwardly, that is, had all the external visible characters of Judaism upon them; so do we too often presume upon an outward Christianity, which how speciously soever it looks, nay, tho' we ourselves are imposed upon by it, (as thinking it will serve all our ends) yet is it indeed rather in the flesh, than in the spirit; and the praise of it is more of men, than of God.

It will, I hope, be worth the while to run over the several heads or instances of this outward Judaism, the particulars that the Jews in St. Paul's time rested so much upon; and to see how exactly the principles of many mens Christianity among us do answer to them. For from this it will appear how much we are concerned to have a care of such principles, and to take other kinds of measures of religion; unless we mean to be content with the shadow of it instead of the substance, and will build our hopes of Heaven upon an airy and fantastic foundation.

I. I begin with that branch of outward Judaism, which St. Paul doth so much insist on, *viz.* their placing their confidence in being the natural seed of Abraham, and being circum-

cised, and having the true religion and worship of God among them. Which privileges gave them so great an opinion of themselves, that they despised all the world besides; nay, they verily thought, that in virtue of those outward advantages they should certainly be saved, let them lead what lives they would. It was a known maxim among them, and is still extant in their books, that every Israelite, if he continue so to his life's end, hath his portion in the kingdom of God. Nothing but apostacy from the faith, could deprive him of it. So great a value they thought God had for the merits of their father Abraham, that for his sake he would not suffer any of his seed to perish (meaning that seed which was promised by Isaac and Jacob.) And it is this notion of theirs that St. John Baptist doth refer to, and tacitly reprove in that speech of his to the Jews, when they came to his baptism; *bring forth, says he, fruits meet for repentance, and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.* (They thought that that alone would preserve them from the wrath to come.) No, says he, *for God is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham,* Matt. iii. 8, 9.

But now, though one would think this should be so groundless a presumption, that none but a conceited Jew should be guilty of it, yet, in truth, do many among us support ourselves, and build our hopes of God's favours upon the very same, or no better a foundation. I pray what great difference is there (I speak as to the inward virtue or merits of the thing) between

being natural born Jews and children of Abraham, and being born of Christian parents? Between an outward Circumcision, and an outward baptism? Between an external profession of the law of God given by Moses, and an external profession of the Gospel of Christ? And yet are there not too many of us, that hope and expect to be saved merely on account of these things? Ask several persons upon what it is that they ground the hopes of God's favour, and what title they can plead to the pardon of their sins: why, the best answer they can make is, They thank God they are not infidels, but born and bred in a Christian country: they were baptized into Christ, and are members of an orthodox church, where religion is professed in its purity, and they have never departed from this profession, but believe as their teachers would have them; and therefore they doubt not of a right to all those promises that Christ hath made to his church.

Far I am here from denying, much more from slighting or undervaluing the great advantages of being born and educated in such a country as ours. I own with all my heart, not only the expediency, but also the absolute necessity of baptism, and a visible profession of the Christian religion. These are things, without which we cannot be saved, in an ordinary way. And, I bless God most unfeignedly, and so, I hope, do we all, for the unspeakable mercy he hath vouchsafed to us of this kingdom, in having the Gospel of Christ, and the worship of God more purely taught, and more sincerely administered

among us, than in most parts of Christendom; and therefore infinite are our blessings and privileges above what the heathen world hath any notion of. But then, for any of us to rest upon these things, and to think ourselves good Christians, and heirs of salvation, because it is our lot to be born and educated in such happy circumstances, without taking any care ourselves to make a good use of them, is just the folly of a man, that, being born to a good estate, riotously spends it all, and yet thinks to die rich. Happy are we that we were baptized in our infancy, and trained up to the profession of a holy religion. And woe be to us, if we trifle away these mercies of God, and abuse that grace which was given us for our improvement in all Christian virtues, to the purpose only of a vain presumption of God's favour, without contributing our most earnest endeavours to our being qualified for it. Baptism and the profession of an holy religion, are most unspeakable blessings; but yet they were not granted us, or required of us for themselves, or that we should rest upon them alone, but for further ends, *viz.* that we might be obliged hereby to forsake the Devil and all his works, the vanities of the world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh, and follow the example of our Lord, into whose discipline we were baptized, by dying daily to sin, and living unto righteousness. If we do not make this use of our baptism and visible profession, they will signify nothing at all to us. To conclude this head, we may truly say of these things what St. Paul here in
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this chapter said of Circumcision, and those other Jewish privileges that he is here talking of, viz. *that they do verily profit, if thou keep the law of Christ: but if thou be a transgressor of that law, thy baptism is no baptism, thy Christianity is no better than heathenism. For he is not a Christian that is one outwardly, neither is that baptism which is outward upon the flesh; but he is a Christian that is one inwardly, and baptism it that of the Heart, in the spirit, and not only that according to the letter of the Gospel.*

II. Another principle of outward Judaism, (as I may call it) in which the Pharisees and other Jews in St. Paul's time were apt to rest (and which was indeed a degree higher than the former instance I mentioned) was their being skilful in the knowledge of their law. This our apostle in this chapter takes notice of, when, reckoning up those things that the Jews had so great a value for in themselves, he names their *having a form of knowledge, and being able to be guides of the blind, and instructors of the ignorant, and teachers of babes*, ver. 19, 20. And indeed such was the genius of that people at that time, that by how much any of them did exceed in knowledge and skilfulness about the mysteries of their law, and the traditions of their forefathers, by so much the better Jews they took themselves to be, and the more acceptable to God; and by so much the more they despised their neighbours that were inferior to them in this kind of knowledge. And hence came that great conceit the Pharisees and Scribes had of themselves, and the great contempt that, upon all

occasions, they expressed of others : *This people, say they, that knoweth not the law, are cursed,* as you find them speaking in St. John's gospel, John vii. 49. Hence it came, that instead of practising the law in their lives, their whole study was taken up in speculations about it, in finding out subtilties, and mysteries, and curiosities, that were above the capacities of ordinary persons ; in which matter we have at this day extant in their writings abundance of instances of their diligence.

And are there not just such a sort of Christians among us ? Are there not some in our days that make Christianity little more than a business of mere speculation, or a set of orthodox opinions, or a more than ordinary knowledge of the mysteries of God ? Are there not too many, who read the word of God indeed, nay, and perhaps, with a great deal of care, if not niceness and curiosity, but yet by no means with an intent to better their lives thereby, by no means to regulate their judgments in any points of faith, or their manners in any points of practice ; but merely for the confirming them in some notion they have taken up, or the establishing some doctrine, that the party they are engaged in are obliged to maintain ? Others, I am afraid, may study the Scriptures to another purpose, which is altogether as unaccountable ; that is to say, merely for the sake of the phrase and language they there meet with ; which, when they are well acquainted with, they do so wretchedly misapply in their religious talk, that, in truth, what is admirable
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sense and reason in the holy books, is little better than jargon and cant, when it comes out of their mouths. With these men, to be a good Christian, is to be able to dispute learnedly about articles of faith, and to be wonderfully orthodox in their opinions, and to have so great a knowledge in the points that are now controverted among Christians, that they can enter the lists for the cause they have espoused against any adversary that opposes them. With others of them, Christianity runs much lower, for it is but talking warmly and zealously in Scripture phrase and language about matters they never gave themselves much trouble to understand; and then who can doubt of their love to God, and their zeal for Jesus Christ?

The men that have these talents, are apt to think meanly enough of those that have them not. Those plain simple Christians, that heartily believe their creed, and endeavour to live honestly among their neighbours, and serve God as well as they can, but yet trouble not themselves with those high points of speculation, nor with the divisions of Christendom, this sort of men (God help them) are, in their opinion, but poor weak Christians, too much under the dispensation of morality, and not yet arrived to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But sure this sort of principles, and these notions of religion, wherever they are found, are but a branch of the old Pharisaism. These kind of men that I have described, how knowing soever they are in the mysteries of God, are

but Jews, I should say, Christians *outwardly*, and *their praise is of men, and not of God.* The true inward Christianity sinks down into the Heart, is a vital principle there of all holy and good actions, makes a man a new creature, and subdues every thing in him that speaks opposition to the holy discipline of our Lord Jesus; but was never intended to flutter above in the brain, and to fill his head with notions and speculations, and there to leave him, with his affections and inclinations, as deeply engaged to the world, and the flesh, and the Devil, as ever they were before. O this is the worst representation of Christianity that can be! *They are not the bearers of the law* (says St. Paul, Rom. ii. 13.) *but the doers of it, that shall be justified.* And *if you know these things* (says our Saviour, John xiii. 17.) *happy are ye if ye do them.* And whatever knowledge of Christ any of us may pretend to above our neighbours, yet *hereby* (says St. John, 1 John ii. 3, 4.) *we know that we know him if we keep his commandments.* But *he that saith he knows him and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

III. Another piece of outward Judaism, which the Scripture often takes notice of, was, the having an extraordinary zeal for things that were in themselves indifferent, and were not commanded of God, and making it a weighty point of religion to observe or abstain from those things. The Jews, and especially the Pharisees, placed a great deal of their religion in these matters. *They loved their own tradi-*
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tions (as our Saviour tells us, Mark vii. 7, 8, 9.) *more than God's commandments.* What a world of stir and bustle did they make about their phylacteries? (which were certain scrolls of parchment, with certain texts of Scripture written upon them, that they tied upon their foreheads, whenever they said their prayers.) There was no law of God for them (unless they forced some proverbial allegorical expression in the law to speak a literal sense, which was not intended;) but yet, as our Saviour reproves them, they were abundantly more careful to have those phylacteries about them, tied on their heads, than to have the law of God written upon their hearts.

What a matter of conscience did they make of cleansing cups and platters, and washing their hands before meat? Infomuch, as the text tells us, *they marvelled to see our Saviour and his disciples to sit down to meat with unwashed hands,* Matt. xv. 1. Mark vii. 2. And abundance of other instances there is to be given of their zeal in matters of this nature.

We now, that are Christians, and know better things, are apt enough to deride the foolish superstitions of those people in those days: but are not we ourselves, many of us, as foolishly superstitious? If we will go over to our neighbour nations, where the popish religion is professed, we shall there see instances in abundance transcending, I verily believe, the very height of the Pharisaic superstition. Good Lord! what stress is there laid upon the adoring the cross of our Lord, and resorting to the images of our lady,

lady, and other saints! And, which is wonderful, all crosses and all images are not of like virtue, but some better serve the necessities of devout adorers than others do! What a meritorious thing is it to say so many *Ave Maria's*, and so many Lord's prayers every day, according to the number of their string of beads! What a security do they account a slight penance, and the priest's absolution, against all the malignity and guilt of their most mortal sins! How safe do they think they are from danger, if they have any relicks or consecrated things about them! Nay, in the very point of death, an indulgence purchased with their money, or a putting on the habit of some religious brother, to the patron of whose society they have devoted themselves, is such a mighty comfort, that they can die in peace!

What is superstition, if this be not? Is not this plainly to place religion in voluntary and uncommanded performances? Pray wherein do these sorts of things exceed the Pharisees phylacteries, or their washing of hands, or cleansing of cups and platters?

But are not some among ourselves guilty of this Pharisaism, as well as our neighbours? I would to God we would lay this matter to Heart. We all pretend to hate superstition extremely. God give us all grace to hate it more, for it is an ill thing wherever it is found. But, in good earnest, is it not as great a piece of superstition, to make it a matter of religion and conscience, to forbear the use of an indifferent thing when God hath not forbid the use
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of it, as it is to make it a matter of religion and conscience to use an indifferent thing when God hath not commanded it? I dare say every one living will be satisfied that there is no difference between these cases, as to the matter of superstition.

But now, if this be so, what must we say of all those persons that refuse communion with us, as to our prayers and our sacraments, merely upon this account, that there are some things in our worship that are not commanded by God, though yet they cannot deny but that they are indifferent in themselves, and that they are commanded by the laws of the land. Let those that are concerned apply this to themselves: and, on the other side, I will say this to those of our communion, if any of them think to recommend themselves to God, merely by a conformity to the gestures, and habits, and forms prescribed by the church in the worship of God, without any inward devotion, or a serious endeavour after a thorough sanctification of body, and soul, and spirit, they are as much devoid of the life of God, as much outward hypocritical professors, Jews or Christians, call them which you will, as any I have now represented.

But there is another sort of people among us that ought not to be forgotten, when we are mentioning this Pharisaical principle of placing religion in things wherein God hath not interposed his command: there are, we know, some among us, that distinguish themselves from the neighbourhood by a particular way of their own,

own, both in their habit, in their speech, in their gestures, in their way of address, in all their conversation. You will easily guess what sort of people I mean. And these singularities they take up upon account of conscience, and place some religion in them. Now, if it be so (and if it be not so, why do not they leave these ridiculous practices?) I say, if it be so, where is the difference between them and the Papists; nay, and the Pharisees, as to this point? How is their Yea and Nay, their refusal of the hat, and twenty such like things, more excusable than the Papists holy water, and crosses and pilgrimages, or the Pharisees phylacteries, and *praying in the corners of the streets.*

The sum of all this head is this, That let us be of what religion, what communion we will, yet if we can give no better evidence of our sincerity, than it was only a zealous practice or forbearance of indifferent things, we are but under the character that is here given in my text of being Jews or Christians *outwardly, and our praise is more of men, than of God.*

IV. Another branch of outward Judaism was, a greater zeal for rituals and ceremonials, though of God's own appointment, than for the moral duties of the law. This was a main point of the Jewish falsely-pretended religion in those days, and occasioned many excellent discourses, both of the prophets, and of our Saviour, and of the apostles. Very punctual they were in observing all the positive ceremonial precepts of the law concerning the worship of God: but thinking these things to be sufficient

to make compensation for all other licentious practices they might indulge themselves in, they took no care to observe those laws that were of inward substantial goodness. They tithed mint and cummin; which things, as our Saviour saith, *they ought to do*, as being commanded by the law; but they made no conscience of *justice, and mercy, and faith, which things they ought much rather to have done*, Matt. xxiii. 23. They were very frequent in fasting and praying. Pray they did in *the very corners of the streets*, Matt. vi. 5. And the Pharisee, that our Saviour mentions, *fasted twice a week*; Luke xviii. 12. which, to be sure, was there set down for an imitation of the practice of that religious sort of men. But yet, in their prayers *they honoured God with their lips, when their Hearts were far from him*, Matt. xv. 8. And in their fasts *they did not cease from their works of violence and iniquity*, as the prophet testifies against them. They were zealous observers of the Sabbath, but did not rest from their wicked works. They were very free to *offer sacrifices to God of their herd, and of their flock, even till he declared that he was cloyed with them, and his soul bated them*. But they were not so free to offer to him their inward man, their Hearts, and spirits, which was the only sacrifice he delighted in.

Now I heartily wish it were well considered, whether we also at this day do not frequently thus play the Jews with God Almighty. I fear there is some reason to believe, that a great many of us are leavened with those very principles

ciples and notions of religion; I mean, that we are very zealous for, and lay a mighty stress upon those duties that concern the outward worship of God, but are not proportionably zealous for the inward spiritual acts of piety (that heavenly frame and temper of mind that can alone recommend us to God) nor for the duties that are next under it; I mean, that universal righteousness, goodness and charity, that is due to our fellow-creatures. Hath not the world experience of some, who would not, for any consideration, swear an oath in their ordinary conversation, (and in that they are highly to be commended) that yet will make no scruple of using very indirect arts for the promoting their own interests, (I will call it by no heavier a name) when they have a fair opportunity offered them? There are those, who are very strict in keeping the Lord's day, and attending the public ordinances of that day; but yet they are not so strict in keeping faith and trust, and preserving their minds from all inward pollutions of worldliness and sensuality. It is not unusual to find those men in the world, that do, at solemn times, receive the sacrament with as great devotion as is possible (and that is the most serious and solemn act of our worship) and yet, within a very little time after (perchance upon the first temptation) return to the same sins they religiously vowed against, and so continue on in that course of life.

In naming of these things, I reflect upon no particular person in the world; for I am sure I think of none, and therefore can mean none.

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But, I doubt, the matter of fact is true as to all those particulars; and therefore what must we say of the persons that are concerned in it? I dare not say, that such persons are hypocrites in the usual sense of the word, because it is very probable they do not perform those duties merely for a shew, but are in good earnest, and verily believe that these things alone are sufficient to the attaining of God's favour, and the entitling them to the pardon of their sins, and everlasting happiness in the world to come; though they continue to indulge themselves in such wicked sinful practices, as their own consciences cannot but continually smite, and reprove, and condemn them for. Such notions men may have got concerning religion, and the terms of salvation offered by Jesus Christ in his gospel. But though I will not call them hypocrites, that is to say, dissemblers either with God or man, yet, I think, we ought to call them outward Pharisaical Christians, that are utterly devoid of the life and spirit of that religion they do profess. I do not blame them, but commend them, for the performing those duties that they do; and I believe, if they had not this respect for the outward worship of God, they would, in a little time, grow extravagantly and enormously wicked. But yet they are exceedingly to be blamed (and if they do not amend their lives, they will blame themselves to all eternity) in that, to their outward services they pay to God, they do not add an intire resignation of the inward man, their whole souls and spirits to be absolutely ruled and governed

verned by those laws of purity and holiness, that are prescribed to them in the gospel. Without this intire devotion of our whole selves to God, all our services will be little better than hypocrisy: but with it all our frailties, and faults, and infirmities, how many soever they be, will be forgiven us; and notwithstanding them, we shall find favour with our heavenly Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus I have given you an account of the outward Jew, that St. Paul speaks of, and shewed you how very much many of our Christian professors do resemble him in their principles and practices; which was the thing I proposed.

And now it will be very needless to enter into a description of the person that St. Paul in the text opposeth to him, *a Jew inwardly, whose Circumcision is that of the Heart, and whose praise is not of men, but of God.* For we may easily form a notion of such a person by what has been said of the other. Let us but affix the directly contrary qualities to him, and then we have his character. However, to save you the trouble of collecting it, I will give you the heads of those things, that go to the making up his description.

1. First of all, the inward Jew, or he that is such an Israelite as our Saviour speaks of, *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*, John i. 47. or, to speak in our own language, a true disciple of Christ: he is, I say, a person, who is so far from vaunting himself, or resting in the outward privileges he enjoys, that he draws from
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hence an argument of working out his salvation with greater fear and trembling, knowing, that by how much the greater advantages he enjoys above others, by so much the greater obligations are laid upon him to out-strip them in virtue and holiness: so as that if he do not improve those mercies and favours of God to the right purposes, he is in a worse condition than those who never had them.

2. Secondly, he is a person tractable and docible; one that hath quitted his mind of all its sinful prejudices and pre-possessions, so that he is always prepared to receive and entertain any truth of God, though conveyed to him by mean instruments, and though never so disagreeable to his sensual delights and interests.

3. Thirdly, he is a person that doth not overvalue some duties and lessen others, but gives every duty to God its due and just place in his esteem, preferring inward acts of piety before the outward service of God, yet not omitting that; and so ordering his devotions towards God, that they are instrumental to, and great promoters of, the duties he owes to his neighbour.

4. Fourthly, he is a person who endeavours to yield an universal obedience to the laws of God, not picking and chusing out of them those to observe, that are easiest and least repugnant to his nature and interests, and laying less stress upon the rest; but doing what he can to observe them all. Not contenting himself only to observe them in his outward actions, but endeavouring to bring his mind and

spirit to a conformity with them, labouring to regulate his thoughts, desires and appetites by them, as well as his conversation.

5. Fifthly, he is a person that seeks not, designs not the praise of men in any thing he doth, but hath a mighty care to approve himself to God. It is the conscience of his duty that is the great spring and principle from whence his actions proceed, and the hinge on which they turn. So that he is always of a piece, always like himself; as religious and devout in private, as in public; as careful of himself and his actions when no body sees him, as when he hath many spectators and observers of his carriage.

6. Sixthly and lastly, he is a person that, when he hath done all, is yet humble and lowly in his own eyes, not pretending to merit any thing at the hand of God. On the contrary, if he had done his whole duty, all that God hath required of him (which yet he is far from being so vain as to think he hath) yet he is sensible that *still he is an unprofitable servant*; he hath done God no good, *he hath only done what he ought to do*, Luke xvii. 10. And therefore far be it from him to think he deserves any thing at the hands of God; nay, he rather desires to lay down in the dust, and, from the bottom of his Heart, to ascribe all that he hath, and all that he is, and all that he hopes for, to his sole grace, favour and goodness, crying out with holy David, *Not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but unto thy holy name be the praise and the glory of all*, Psal. cxv. 1.

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He that hath these characters upon him, is certainly an Israelite indeed, a true Nathanael, one that is beloved of God, and shall inherit the promises both of this life, and that which is to come. Now that we may be all such, and consequently be so happy, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

The Vanity of worldly Happiness

THESE words contain one of those conclusions that I have drawn from the several experiments which I have made in this search after happiness. And if we consider by whom they were spoken, and upon how much consideration, and in what trials and exercises, we may depend upon it that they are though a short, yet a very just description and representation of the state of human life, and considered, that there is very little prospect of any man being happy here, that hath no view beyond the things of this world. I have

S E R M O N V

The Vanity of worldly Happiness.

By Archbishop SHARP.

ECCLES. ii. 11.

Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was Vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

THESE words contain one of those conclusions that Solomon draws from the several experiments which he had made in his search after happiness. And if we consider by whom they were spoken, and upon how much consideration, and after what trials and experience; we may depend upon it that they are, though a short, yet a very true description and representation of the state of human life: and consequently, that there is very little prospect of any man's being happy here, that hath no views beyond the things of this present world. There

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is no man living can ever expect to be in more happy outward circumstances than Solomon was, or to enjoy more of this world's good than Solomon did. And if he, after all, found nothing but labour and trouble, and dissatisfaction and emptiness, no real profit, no advantage in any worldly thing, what must we, *that come after the king* (as he expresseth it in this chapter; ver. 12. what must we) expect to find? Certainly no better fortune than he did.

And if this be the case of mankind, how unaccountable is it, that any of us should fix our thoughts and designs, our comforts and expectancies upon any thing under the sun. And yet, God knows, thus most of us do; *though the bed is shorter than that we can stretch ourselves upon it, and the covering narrower than that we can wrap ourselves in it* (as the prophet speaks, Isa. xxviii. 20.) nay, though every thing in nature calls upon us, (in the words of another prophet, Micah ii. 10.) saying, *Arise, for this is not your rest*; yet, vain men! we will needs set up our rest here. We are willing to think of nothing farther than this world. We are so wholly immersed in the businesses and concernments of this present life, that we have no room or leisure for the thoughts of that which is to come. If it would please God to let us live always as we do, we should be well content, we should desire nothing more. We should say to God, as one of the apostles did once to our Saviour, *Lord, it is good for us to be here*, Matt. xvii. 4.

But how absurd are these wishes! How ridiculous is this carriage! Nothing in the world can apologize for it. It is just the same folly that those men are guilty of, that being tossed up and down at sea, yet nevertheless desire to be still there, and cannot endure to think of coming to a port. It is the madness of those, that being condemned to dig in the mines, are so much in love with toil and labour, with chains and darkness, that they despise a life above ground, a life of light and liberty. In a word, it is the fantastic punishment of Tantalus in the poets, that these men wish for themselves: they desire to spend their time forever in gaping after those lovely pleasant fruits, which (they fancy) seem almost to touch their mouths. Yet all their labour is in vain: and as they never did, so they never shall be able to come at them.

Will you give me leave, in pursuance of my text, to make good this by an induction of particulars. From hence you will too plainly see the truth of Solomon's proposition, and consequently how foolish it is to look for happiness in any thing of this world.

I. And first of all, let us consider the continual toil and labour that mankind in this world are exposed to. Such is the state of human things, that there are very few hours of our lives in which we are at ease, and free from care and travail: but mostly we are in a hurry, and one labour still succeeds on the neck of another. The dispatching of one business is but the making room for some other, and possibly

possibly more troublesome one, that is presently to follow after. We toil till we are weary, and have exhausted our strength and spirits, and then we think to refresh and recruit ourselves: but, alas! that refreshment is only to prepare and enable us for the bearing the next hour's burthen, which will inevitably come upon us. We are all of us, more or less, servants and bondmen, under a constant and fatal necessity of doing drudgery. What a world of pains and hardships is undergone by a great part of mankind merely for getting a livelihood, a subsistence for themselves and their families? Though God knows, it is oftentimes a very mean one; they, with all their toil and labour, having much ado to keep themselves from a prison or an hospital. As for others, that are put by providence into better outward circumstances, they are never a jot the more free from anxiety and cares. For though they are provided of necessary supports, yet the desire of maintaining their credit in the world, and living up to the height of their quality and fortune, or the ambition of advancing their families, and leaving their children in more splendid circumstances, than they find themselves; I say, one of these things puts them upon the necessity of continually harassing their minds with worldly solicitude and drudging, as if they had nothing to depend upon. Those that are not troubled with the pangs of covetousness, but are well content with that portion that God hath given them, yet find difficulty and vexation enough in the very discharge of their callings and employments.

ments. Or suppose they have no calling to follow, but seem to be loose from the world, yet it is scarce possible for them to live without driving on some designs, either of pleasure or ambition, or twenty other things, according as their temper inclines them. And the carrying on these designs, doth put their heads as much upon the rack, and oblige them to as laborious and active a diligence, as if they were some of the busy men of the world: nay, that course of life, which, of all others, seems the quietest and the least cumbersome, *viz.* the abstracting ourselves from the world, and applying our minds to contemplation and the knowledge of things, yet doth even that (such is our frame in this world) engage men in as much labour as any of the rest. *He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth trouble*, Eccl. i. 18. *And much study is a weariness of the flesh*, as Solomon tells us, chap. xii. 12.

In a word, this whole life is nothing else but a circle of cares, and designs, and business, and vexations. *Man is born to labour and trouble, as the sparks fly upwards*, Job v. 7. and therefore to term this sublunary world a place of ease and repose, is the improperest name we can call it by.

2. But, secondly, this is not all: we might, possibly, find some comfort in that pains and labour we take in this world, at least, they would be much more supportable, if we were sure our designs would always succeed; if we were sure to attain that which we labour for: but, alas! it is oftentimes quite otherwise.

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We meet with frequent disappointments in our endeavours: nay, we cannot say before-hand, of any thing we undertake, that it shall certainly come to pass as we would have it. And this is a matter that renders the world a place of still more restlessness and disquiet. Would it not vex a man, when he hath set his Heart upon a thing, and hath laid his plots for the bringing it about as well as the wit of man can devise, and hath pursued the business with great industry and diligence, hath made his friends, hath removed, as he thinks, all the rubs that lay between him and his designs, and hath brought matters to that pass, that he seems just upon the point of obtaining his wishes; and yet in a moment, by some unforeseen cause, or unthought-of accident, which it was not in the power of man to prevent, to be defeated of his expectations, to have his hopes blasted, and to be but just where he was before? And yet this is nothing but what every day happens in the course of the world, and is impossible to be avoided. Nay, in truth, considering upon what a multitude of things the success of our designs or endeavours doth depend, (none of which are yet in our power) we have reason to wonder that our labours do succeed so often as they do, rather than that they miscarry so frequently.

If now it be a state of happiness to be always busy and designing, and yet always to be uncertain whether our designs shall take effect; to be passionate, and earnest, and impatient in our desires of many things, and yet for once obtaining what we desire, to be twice disappointed;

pointed ; to tire ourselves with bustling to obtain our ends, and yet often to reap nothing but the wind for all our pains ; I say, if this be happiness, if this be the life we can sit down content with, then we may call this world a happy place. Otherwise not.

3. But, thirdly, this is not all yet. Supposing, after several disappointments, and with much difficulty, we do attain our ends, and get what our souls desired, yet doth the thing answer our expectation? Do we find that it is fit, and good, and convenient for us? If so, then we seem to have laboured to some purpose. But if not, then we are but still where we were ; nay, we had better never have troubled our heads about it. But now that it frequently happens in the world that men long passionately, and take a great deal of pains for those things which, when they are once possessed of, they find quite different from what they hoped for, and very much unfitting their circumstances, is too much attested by the experience of mankind to be denied. We are fanciful in our desires and appetites, and many times direct our choice and designs, not so much by our own needs and necessities, as the opinions of other men. We think every thing that is fine or brave, that is esteemed or set by in the world, will presently become us. But then, after we have with much toil got what we wished for, then we find ourselves mistaken in our counsels, we see we had better have been without those things : we see that instead of contributing to our happiness, they expose us to a great many

more troubles and mischiefs, than the condition we were in before. The truth is, we do not know before-hand what is good for us in this world, and yet we will not leave the ordering our condition to God, who only doth know. But we will needs be projecting for ourselves, and we do, with might and main, carry on those projects: and God is sometimes pleased to permit them to take effect. And the event is, that by our own choice, and at the expence of abundance of pains, we make ourselves unhappy. The generality of men, not content with that portion of outward goods which is allotted them, will needs be rich, in spite of their destiny; and some of them succeed in their wishes: but not having tempers and spirits contrived for great fortunes, this wealth of theirs doth engage them in many great follies and vices, (that without it possibly they had never been guilty of) which, in the end, do often prove their undoing. Those that have no children, how desirous are they of them! and yet who knows, but if God grant their desires, those children might prove the greatest torments to them that ever beset them? Few love to live in obscurity, but would be somebody, would be in a conspicuous station in the world: yet it may be, when they have attained to great places, they are not qualified for them, they are not fit to manage them; and their heads, being too weak to look down from such a precipice, they either grow dizzy and stand trembling, or tumble down with a much greater ruin. And as it is in these instances, so it is
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proportionably with most of the other designs we pursue in this world, whether they be little or great.

So that, in truth, the lot of mankind, in this life, is very hard. In all our labours, we either hit, or miss; we either succeed, or are disappointed. If we be disappointed, we are certainly troubled: and if we do succeed, for any thing we know, that very success may prove our greatest unhappiness.

4. But, fourthly, to go a little further yet; let us suppose that we have brought no inconvenience upon ourselves by our choice. Let us suppose our designs were reasonable, and they rightly succeeded, and the circumstances of our condition are every way fit and proper for us: yet, is this sufficient to procure us content? May we then say to ourselves, *Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry?* Alas! there is too much reason to fear the contrary; for such is the constitution of this world, that let us be in what circumstances we will, yet we shall meet with many troubles and inconveniencies that do necessarily flow from the nature of that condition which we are in, though otherwise it may be the fittest for us of all others. There is no state of life, even the most desirable, but is attended with many peculiar disadvantages of its own. Others possibly, that are at a distance, may not see this. They may think us very happy. They may admire our good fortune, that were born under such lucky planets. They believe we live free from all manner of inquietude and discontent. But we know other things.

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We feel where our shoe pincheth us. We are sensible, that if others saw into our state, as much as we do ourselves, they would not be so apt to envy us. Nay, so far are even the happiest among us, from pleasing ourselves in our ways of living, that we often think we see others that are happier than we, and with whom, as to many things, we would willingly change conditions. Are we engaged in a life of action and business? How do we applaud the happiness of those that live in ease and privacy, and can command their own time. Do we, on the contrary, live in retirement, and have but few affairs to mind? Why then our time lies upon our hands, and we complain for want of employment, and call only those happy that are men of business. Are we in great and splendid circumstances, above the rank of common men? Then we feel the cares and burthens that this brings upon us, and only cry up the secure quiet state of those that live in a lower sphere. But are we, on the contrary, in a low condition? Who then with us, but the great men, that carry the world before them? Thus are we generally unsatisfied with the present condition in which we are, and apt to like any other better than our own.

Now this kind of discontent doth not always arise from the inconstancy of our minds, but from the particular grievances and inconveniencies that our state of life is attended with; which we, being in that state, are extremely sensible of: but we consider not that there are the same, or as great, in other conditions. Briefly, our way in this world is all strewed with

with briers and thorns; we can tread no where but our feet are pricked. There is no sincere unmingled good to be met with. Every state of life, as it hath something of good in it, so the best hath some evil displeasing appendages inseparably adhering to it. Nay, perhaps, in true speaking, the worldly happiness of any man's condition is not to be measured by the multitude of goods he enjoyeth in it, but rather by the fewness of the evils it brings upon him.

5. But, fifthly, to go further yet; let us suppose we find no inconvenience in the circumstances of our lives: we will suppose we are possessed of many goods, from the enjoyment of which we may promise to ourselves solid contentment and satisfaction. These are our present thoughts. But are we sure we shall always continue in the same mind? Are we sure that that which is now very grateful and agreeable, and affects us with a sensible pleasure and delight, will continue always to do so? On the contrary, have we not much reason to fear, that, in a little time, it will grow dull and un-affecting; nay, possibly, very irksome and displeasing? Such is the nature of mankind, or the nature of things themselves, that no earthly delight or comfort can please us long. We are, indeed, very fond of them at the first, and are much tickled and transported with them: but after we have a while enjoyed them, we are cloyed; our appetites to them are gone, and we throw them behind us, as children do those play-toys that at first they were wonderfully fond

fond of. The greatest blessings of this world are to the mind of man, as any one sort of fare, though never so delicious, is to a weak stomach; by long usage they become flat and unsavoury, and have quite another relish than they had at first, when they were novelties to us.

6. But I have not yet done with this point. To all these things let us add, in the sixth place, the numberless daily troubles and discomposures of mind, not peculiar to any condition, as those I spoke of before, but common to all, arising from mens minds and tempers, and the things and persons they converse with in the world. It is a melancholy consideration; but I believe the experience of mankind will make it good, that there is scarce a day in our lives, that we pass in perfect uninterrupted peace and content, but something or other every day happens that gives us trouble, and makes us uneasy to ourselves. Nor do I speak this only of the extremely vicious, or the extremely unfortunate, the greatest part of whose lives is certainly very irksome and troublesome to them, but of those persons that are the happiest, those that have the least reason to complain either of their outward or inward condition.

Let any man pick out any day of his life, and seriously observe the particular passages of it, and the state of his own mind under those passages, and, I am confident, he will find, that though the evil of that day doth not counter-balance the good, yet it is sufficient to interrupt his happiness, and to render him very unsatisfied,

unsatisfied, as to several things. Either he finds himself dull, or out of humour; or he is persecuted by some very disagreeable company; or he saith or doth something that he afterwards severely reflects on; or he is displeased with some language or carriage of others towards him; or he is put out of his temper by some ill news, or the miscarriage of some of his affairs; or he finds some troublesome passion to arise in him that disturbs the peace of his spirit; he is racked with fears or with hopes; or discomposed with anger and peevishness; or he is haunted with the memory of some past folly or sin; or he is dispirited with too much labour; or dull for want of employment; or vexed with some troublesome business; or cloyed with his recreations and diversifements; or something or other he doth or suffereth that is not very grateful to him. The discontents which arise from such causes as these, are indeed infinite and innumerable; and though singly taken, they are very small matters, yet being taken in the lump, and likewise coming so thick upon us every day, they really make human life, in the general, and as to most of the periods of it, to be a troublesome, unquiet, unsatisfactory thing.

7. But, seventhly, if these little things I have mentioned be considerable enough to trouble our days, what must we say of the many sad accidents, and more grievous and weighty afflictions, that do frequently exercise the patience of mankind? If in the best condition of human life, men are not happy, but every

every thing is able to ruffle and disorder them ; O how miserable are they in the worst ! It is true, all men do not suffer equally, but some much more than others ; but yet he that is afflicted least in this world, hath his sufficient share of pain and anguish, and feels enough to try his courage and his patience to the uttermost ; especially if to the consideration of his own sufferings he adds the bitter things that he sees others undergo, some of which may likewise come to his own share before he goes out of the world.

It is able, in truth, to draw tears from one's eyes, seriously to reflect upon the sad, deplorable, calamitous condition of a great part of mankind in this world ; to exhibit to our minds that dismal scene of things that are every day presented to our eyes. Here are some languishing under a long and tedious distemper, unfit for all the functions, and incapable of any of the enjoyments of life. Others roaring out for the extremity of torture they suffer from the stone, or the gout, or an ulcer, or a broken limb, or some such other tormenting accident. Others mourning for the loss of a dear parent, on whom they depended ; or the death of a child, who was the stay and comfort of their age. Others fretting and fuming for the disgraceful circumstances they are fallen into from an high fortune. Others even heart-broken, for the poverty and necessity to which they are reduced through the profuseness of their lives, or the misadventures of trade, or the ruins of a fire, or the calamities of a war. Others groaning

groaning and howling under the whips and stings of an awakened conscience, being filled with horror and amazement, and despair, from the sense of their crimes, and the apprehensions of the vengeance of God in the other world. Others (which is indeed the saddest sight of all) wallowing in all manner of sensuality and wickedness, giving up the reins to their brutish appetites, committing all sorts of villanies, murders, rapines, and beastialities, without sense of God or religion; regardless of their own souls, or the souls of others; dishonouring their profession, blaspheming his name that made them, and, in a word, making all the haste they can to everlasting damnation.

These things are very sad, and must deeply affect us, though we ourselves were not concerned in them. But, alas! we are none of us mere spectators of the miseries of others; we must expect to bear a great part ourselves in this tragedy. So long as we have mortal bodies exposed to sickness and diseases, to sad accidents and casualties; so long as we have a frail nature, that betrays us to a thousand follies and sins; so long as we have dear friends and relations, or children, that we may be deprived of; so long as we may prove unfortunate in our marriage, or in our posterity, or in the condition of life we have chosen; so long as there are men to slander us, or to rob us, or to undermine us; so long as there are storms at sea, or fire upon land; so long as there are enemies abroad, or tumults, seditions, and turns of state at home: I say, so long as we are exposed

to these things, we must, every one of us, expect, in some degree or other, to bear a share in the miseries of the world.

And now, all these things considered, judge ye whether this world doth look like a place of rest; whether it is not rather a stage of calamities and sad events. Judge ye, whether the best of human things be not (as Solomon here tells us) *vanity*; but the worst of them, intolerable *vexation of spirit*.

8. Which will still appear the more evident, if, in the eighth and last place, we add this, namely, that though all we have hitherto said did go for nothing; though we could be supposed to be exempted from all those inconveniencies and mischiefs I have mentioned; though we could be supposed to be capable of an uninterrupted enjoyment of the good things of this life as long as we live; (which yet, you see, in the constitution of things, is impossible) yet even this would not satisfy much to the making our state in this world easy and happy; for there is one thing still would spoil all such hopes and pretences, and that is, the *fear of death*, which, as St. Paul truly observes, hath made mankind *all their life-time subject to bondage*, Heb. ii. 15. For a man to consider, that how happy and prosperous soever his circumstances are, yet he is mortal as well as other folks; he must, in a little time, die, as he sees his neighbours do; and leave all his comforts behind him; O what a dismal reflection must this needs be to a man who hath set up his rest in this world; and dreams of no other happiness but

what he hath here! To think, that in a few years at the farthest, but possibly in a few months or days, (for no man knows how soon the time will come that God will call him) he shall lie down in the dust, and then all that he hath here possessed and enjoyed, is lost and gone, irrecoverably gone! Only there is his carriage and behaviour in this world, his virtues and his vices, his thoughts, and words, and actions, that will go with him into the other world, and these must be severely scanned and accounted for! I say, for a man, that hath no other aims in this world, to consider these things, how ungrateful, how tormenting must the thought of them be! What rest, what peace can accrue to him from all the satisfactions of this life! This business of dying, and what is to come after it, is such a bitter sauce, such a mixture of gall and wormwood to all a sensual man's enjoyments, that it is impossible to avoid the being miserable under the apprehensions of it.

O that we would seriously think upon these things! We should certainly have this advantage by it, that we should not any longer be cheated with the gaudy appearances of this world, but look after something more solid, more substantial, than any thing we find here, to live for, to set our hearts and affections upon. We should tremble to think of having received our good things in this life, and look upon ourselves as most wretched forlorn creatures, if we had no farther hopes and expectancies. And this is the use for which I intended all this discourse,

course, which I beg leave a little to insist upon, and then I conclude.

I have given you (you see) a picture, as well as I could draw it, of the state of this present world, and the condition of that man, who looks no farther than it. And this, in order (as I told you at the beginning) to the shewing the folly and madness of placing our Happiness in any thing here to the neglect of Heaven and eternity. But I am sensible this account I have given will be apt to give offence to some. They will say, that all this declamation against the world, is little better than a libel against the divine providence. For what doth the representing human life, as so imperfect, so dull, so miserable an estate; what doth this mean, but to call the goodness and wisdom of God into question, since he might as easily have contrived it better?

I answer, No such matter. There will appear no colour for this objection, if we would consider that God seems on purpose to have framed this earthly state so short, and imperfect, and obnoxious to evils, as we find it, that we might not set our hearts upon it; that we might not think of fixing here, but should esteem ourselves strangers and pilgrims, and look up to him for an abiding and continuing city in another country. If God had intended that this world should have been our dwelling place for ever, he would certainly have so contrived the frame of it, and so have ordered all its affairs, and he would likewise have so suited our natures and faculties thereunto, that every

good man, at least, should never have failed of enjoying all the satisfactions and happiness here that he was capable of. But since God designed men for another and more glorious place than this world, and sent them hither only as probationers, or by way of trial, how they would use those talents that he gave them, and in order to the fitting them for that glorious and eternal inheritance above; it was the greatest kindness God could do us, not to make this world too tempting a place, but to exercise all that come into it with such labours, and difficulties, and uneasinesses, that none, that hath his wits about him, may be fond of it, but groan after those eternal mansions that God hath provided for all good men in Heaven. We come hither as into a school, or place of exercise, that, by the severe discipline that is here used, we might be trained up and fitted for a glorious and immortal state. So that it is for great good ends to us that we are no happier in this world, and consequently it is no disparagement to the goodness of God.

Others will be apt to quarrel with the description I have given of the state of this world, upon account that it is so melancholy and uncomfortable. This account of things (say they) takes away from us all possibility of any tolerable content or happiness in this life.

But to them I answer, No, by no means, but only from those persons that expect no other state but this, and therefore live in the world as if they were to live there always. Such men as these, I have sufficiently shewed, will always
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be miserable in the best circumstances of life, and therefore much more in the worst ones. But there is a way of being very happy, very contented, nay, of perpetually rejoicing in this world. And that is, to sit as loose as we can from it: not to enslave ourselves to it; but to govern our affections, and appetites, and passions, by the rule of reason and the word of God: to remember that we were made for the enjoyment of God, and therefore to love him above all things, to place our hope, our confidence, our trust, our dependance, our joy and comfort in him, and him only: to make it the business of our lives to approve ourselves to him, by keeping a clear and unspotted conscience, by practising righteousness, and sobriety, and godliness in all our conversation: and lastly, to cast up our eyes continually to those glorious rewards that our Saviour hath provided for us in the regions above; so that Heaven may have our hearts, our affections, while this world hath our bodies. If we frame our minds and lives according to these measures, we shall never be miserable, let the world be as calamitous as it will. We shall be out of the reach of the common accidents and disasters of human life; that is to say, though they come upon us, yet they shall not harm or dismay us. We shall have something to support us, and to bear up our spirits against every ruffle, every disappointment, every thing that can come cross to us. And, to conclude, as we shall enjoy abundance of peace and comfort in this world, though mixed with some

uneasiness; so, when we come to die, we shall be the most glorious happy creatures that words can express, or the mind of man conceive; for then we shall enter into that eternal rest, *which God hath prepared for them that love him: which that we may all do, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

Of making our Calling and Election
sure.

By Archbishop SHARP.

2 PET. i. 10.

*Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence,
to make your Calling and Election sure.*

IN treating on this text, I shall speak to these
four points.

I. What is meant by *making our Calling and Election sure.*

II. How or by what means, they are to be made sure.

III. What it is to *give all diligence to make them sure.*

IV. The great obligations that lie upon all of us *to give all diligence.*

I. I begin with the first point, what it is *to make our Calling and Election sure.*

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And here we must first enquire what is meant by *our Calling and Election*: and then what it is to make them sure.

1. As for this word Calling, it is generally used in the New Testament, to express that especial grace and mercy of God, by which men are brought to the belief and profession of Christ's religion. That this is the Scripture notion of Calling, would be easy to shew, by a particular enumeration of those texts where this word is used; but I shall only now mention two or three principal ones, which give light to this matter.

Ye see, brethren, (says St. Paul, 1 Cor. i. 26.) your Calling, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. Where the being called is nothing else but the becoming Christians. And the sense of the place is this, That however the rich, the great and worldly wise men might have the gospel preached to them, and were invited to the Christian profession, yet few of them did receive that invitation, or were effectually called, it being chiefly the poorer and humbler sort of men that gave in their names to Christ.

Thus again: Eph. iv. 1. *I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation (Calling) where-with ye are called.* That is, in plain English, let your lives and conversations be suitable to that Christian profession that God hath honoured you with.

Thus again, St. Paul affirms of all Christians, of all that are within the pale of the church, that they are called with an holy Calling, 2 Tim. i. 9.

i. 9. and that they *are partakers of the heavenly Calling*, Heb. iii. 1. and lastly, in his language the *called* are those that are opposed to the infidels, whether they were Jews or Greeks, 1 Cor. i. 24.

We see by these passages, what is the notion of our Calling; for as for the other term in my text, that of Election, whatever that word may signify in other places, yet here it seems to mean the same thing, in effect, with Calling. If there be any difference between them, it is this, that our Calling respects our being actually brought over to the belief of Christ's religion: our Election respects God's purposes and designs in conferring those privileges upon us long before we were in being. The latter word expresses God's eternal designs of grace and mercy to us, in putting us into a condition of salvation by Jesus Christ. The former word expresses his actual execution of those designs, by actually bringing us in the course of his providence to the knowledge and belief of Christ Jesus.

This difference, I say, we may make between these words, if we will criticise upon them: but still, as I said, in effect, they come to the same thing. For whosoever is called of God, is also elected of God, in this sense of the word *elect*; and hence it is, that all Christians, in opposition to pagans and infidels, are called *an elect generation*, 1 Pet. i. 9. just as all the Israelites, in opposition to the nations about them, are frequently in the Old Testament called *an elect people*,

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It is true, there is in Scripture another notion of the elect, than what I have now given, *viz.* where they are taken for those that not only enjoy the outward privileges of the gospel, but really walk worthy of them, and so are actually approved of God. Now to be elect in this sense, is something more than to be called; and in this sense it is that our Saviour is to be understood, when he tells us more than once, that *many are the called, but few are the elect or chosen*, Matt. xx. 16. xxii. 14. Which we are not to understand thus, Many are those that are called to be Christians, but few are those that are decreed to be saved; (for though this sense may be orthodox, yet it doth not at all agree with the scope of our Saviour's words) but we are to understand his speech thus, Many there are that come in at the call of the gospel, and list themselves among the number of the Christian professors; but few are those that live up to that profession, and so are accepted and approved of God as worthy Christians.

But the being elect in this sense, is not the Election that my text here speaks of. For this Election is already made sure and firm, by the sincere obedience of the persons so elected: but the Election spoken of in my text, is supposed not yet to be so; but we are exhorted to make it so. It would be a vain thing for the apostle to bid us *give all diligence to make our Election sure*, if it was already sure without our diligence.

II. And thus much of the notion and importance of those terms Calling and Election.

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And from what has been said concerning them, it will be easy to gather, in the second place, what it is to make them sure. For since by our Calling and Election is meant the free grace and favour of God in bringing us to the knowledge and profession of his gospel, and owning us for his own people, and as such, designing us to glory and happiness; the making of these sure or firm, must be the taking care that we do not *receive this grace of God in vain*; but that it may really prove effectual to us, that is to say, that we may actually obtain the benefits that were intended us thereby, *viz.* the everlasting salvation of our souls.

I know there are some that would give another account of *making our Calling and Election sure*. They suppose that they are already sure in the event; so that no man, who is called and elected, can finally lose the benefits of them. But the apostle would have us further to make them sure to ourselves; that is, to use all diligence to get ourselves assured that we are in the number of those that are called and elected to salvation; and that this is all that he meant by this exhortation. But, I think, this gloss is without any foundation; nay, is rather expressly contrary to the design of the apostle in this place. For it is plain, that he here speaks of such a Calling and Election, as that one, who is so called and elected, may yet fall away, and finally miscarry: else why doth he add in the next words, *if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*; which plainly implies, that if they did not do them, they might fall. Besides, the
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very words he here useth, will hardly bear such a construction as those persons would put upon it; for *βεβαιωσιν* doth not signify to get ourselves assured of a thing, as they would have it, but to make a thing firm and sure; which is quite a different matter.

To this purpose therefore we may suppose St. Peter spoke to the Christians in my text: Great, O Christians, are the favours that God hath vouchsafed to you. He hath called you from the darkness of idolatry and superstition, *to the light of his glorious gospel.* Ye, who were once *not a people*, are now *the peculiar treasure of the Lord.* Ye, who were once the *children of wrath*, are now, *through faith in Christ Jesus, begotten again to the hope of an eternal inheritance among the sons of God.* God hath chosen you out of the world, to be his favourites here on the earth, and to crown you eternally in Heaven. All these great things he hath done, and designed for you. But then you must remember, that there is something to be done on your part, in order to the effectually reaping the benefits of these privileges. These promises of God are made to you upon certain conditions; which conditions, if you do not perform, you may fail of obtaining them. Far therefore be it from you to live at random, without taking any further thought, presuming on the favour of God, because you have the honour of being retainers to his Son. Far be it from you to be careless and unconcerned, as if indeed you were already secure of eternal happiness, because you have God's Calling and Election thereto.

thereto. On the contrary, it will concern you to use your utmost care and diligence to qualify yourselves for the receiving the fruits and benefits of these mercies and favours of Christ Jesus, and by this means to render them firm and sure; that is to say, effectual to the good of your souls: which, indeed, otherwise will be so far from being advantages to you, that they will prove aggravations of your guilt and of your misery. For *how shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation*, as is brought to you by the Lord? Fear therefore, lest a promise being left you of entering into his rest, any of you fall short thereof. Give all imaginable diligence to make sure to yourselves those gracious designs of mercy that God had towards you, when he brought you to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And thus much of the first point, what it is to *make our Calling and Election sure.*

N. The next thing is to inquire how, or by what means, this is to be done. Now as to that, the text itself will afford us a sufficient answer, if we will follow the reading of the vulgar Latin translation, and many likewise of the ancient Greek copies: for they read it thus; "Wherefore the rather, my brethren, give all diligence by your good works to make your Calling and Election sure." Which reading doth indeed extremely well suit with what follows, *for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.* So that according to this account, it is good works, or a course of virtuous actions, that must secure to us our Calling and Election. And this is a true and certain account of the matter, whether

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whether the text be to be read thus or no; for it may plainly be concluded from the apostle's discourse, both before and after the text, *if ye do these things* (says he) *ye shall never fall*. These things! What things? Why certainly either good works, as I said before, are here referred to; or, if that clause be not in the text, then those things that the apostle had just been speaking of in the verses before the text, must be here understood. Now what these were, you may see in the 5th verse; *And besides this*, says he, *giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity.* For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. And then follow the words of my text, *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence, to make your Calling and Election sure; for if you do these things, ye shall never fall; but an entrance shall be administered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus*, ver. 10, 11. So that it is plain, from the apostle's discourse, that the things, by which we must make our Calling and Election sure, are no other than the things which he had been before recommending, *viz. the adding to our faith virtue, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, charity*; in a word, all the fruits

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fruits of a holy conversation. These are the things, which if we do, we shall never fall: these are the things, upon our performance of which, an entrance shall be administred unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Faith alone will not do; but faith joined with universal obedience will; that is to say, a sincere and constant endeavour in all our thoughts, and words, and deeds, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts: and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world; this is that by which we must make our Calling and Election sure. And thus much of the second point.

III. The third thing is to inquire what is meant by giving all diligence to make our Calling and Election sure. Now this phrase doth certainly import thus much, viz. that we must shake off all sloth and idleness, and with great industry, and fervor, and activity, set ourselves upon the work.

We must not think that the eternal welfare of our souls can be secured by a few good thoughts or purposes, or now and then an act of repentance, or a fit of devotion, or some faint languid endeavours to be good. Alas! who ever succeeded in any worldly design without more diligence? Who ever got an estate, or attained to any compleat degree of learning or knowledge, but was more eager and industrious in the pursuit of it than this amounts to? And can we think that heaven and eternal happiness can be purchased at a less price than a small perishing good? Can we imagine that God will be so lavish of the greatest blessings he can be-

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slow, that he will let them be earned with a less degree of application than will suffice to compass those blessings that he sets the least value upon, and which he vouchsafes often, in the course of his providence, to the worst of mankind?

No; if ever we mean to secure that inestimable treasure to ourselves, we must lay out our whole selves upon it; it must have the first place in our esteem and in our affections; it must be the daily object of our thoughts, and desires, and meditations; we must hunger and thirst after it; we must study, and contrive, and take pains, all the ways we can, to get ourselves possessed of it. We must make it the great business and design of our lives, and not only a work by the by, a work to be dispatched at leisure hours, when we have nothing else to do; in a word, we must sell all we have to purchase it. This, I am sure, is that which our Saviour tells us, Matt. xiii. 4, 5. *The kingdom of heaven, saith he, is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.* And again he tells us, *that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,* Matt. xi. 12. It is such a kingdom as cannot be entered, but by assault and storm; that is to say, it will require the utmost of our resolution, and vigour, and vigilance, and constancy, for the attaining of it.

There is another thing that seems to be implied in this phrase of *giving all diligence to make our Calling and Election sure*; and that is, a
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very title to heaven, in believing that they have a title to it. If they can but be persuaded strongly enough, that Christ died for them in particular, and that he fulfilled the law in their stead, and can but apply with confidence all his merits to themselves, and rest upon him alone for salvation, without any works of their own, they think they have done all that is required under the new covenant; and whoever talks of more, doth not understand the doctrine of free grace, as it is there held forth. But then St. Paul was ignorant of the free grace of the gospel. Did not he understand the terms upon which we are to be saved? Yet see with what anxiety and sollicitude he expresseth himself, even as to his own particular in this matter of his salvation: *If by any means, says he, I may attain to the resurrection of the dead, (that is, of the just) not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect: but I follow after, that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those which are before, I press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus, Phil. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14.* Thus doth the holy apostle declare his great concern and sollicitous care that he used for the saving his own soul, when yet undoubtedly he had already as much assurance of it, as any of us can now a-days pretend to: and if so much care was still necessary for him, will it not, at least, be as necessary for us? Shall we presume

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to think of our gaining the prize upon easier terms than he durst trust to? And thus much let it suffice to have spoken of our third general head in my proposed method.

IV. I come to the fourth and last, and that is, to stir you up to the practice of the apostle's exhortation in my text, *viz.* that you would *give all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure.*

Let me therefore, in the name of the Lord Jesus, call upon all of you, that have been hitherto negligent and careless in this matter, that you would now at least seriously set about it. As you love your souls, leave not this affair any longer at random: do not sit down satisfied with the vain and uncertain hopes that you may do well enough hereafter, that you live in as good condition as your neighbours; but with your whole might and strength apply yourselves to the working out that salvation, which God hath called and elected you to.

And in order hereunto, let me desire you seriously to think of what vast importance and concernment this business is to you. It is no trifling matter. It is not a thing that may be done, or left undone; but the happiness or misery of your whole life, and that to all eternity, depends upon it. The securing our future salvation is a concern truly infinite. All the other affairs we have to take care of in the world are but trifles to it. And ought not our care then and diligence in this matter to bear some proportion with the greatness of the concern we have in it? Is it not a wretched foolish part in us to

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be busy about small matters, to be earnest and unwearied in the pursuit of little designs, such as a little wealth, or pleasure, or the like, which, after a few years, will signify nothing at all to us, nor shall we be one jot the better for them, and to be altogether careless and negligent of that affair, by which we must be concluded either the most happy, or the most miserable, of all creatures for ever? To shew the extreme folly of this kind of temper, put the case that you had nothing in the world to concern yourselves about but only your body; would not every one count you mad, if they saw you taking mighty care for the cloathing or adorning some single limb, as for instance, your hand or your foot, and yet so regardless of the rest, as to leave them quite naked and exposed to all the inconveniencies of wind and weather? Or if they saw you extremely solicitous about a scratch in your finger, and yet altogether unconcerned at a deep wound in your side, which, without speedy succour, might prove mortal to you? Why, in good earnest, every whit as foolishly and as unreasonably do you act, when, having an immortal soul to provide for as well as a body, you spend all your care upon this, and take no thought for the other; when you think no pains too much for the preventing or getting rid of some small temporal inconvenience, that may affect your bodies, and yet will hardly employ a thought how you may escape the everlasting damnation both of your souls and bodies in hell-fire.

Ay,

Ay, but, you will say, there is a great deal of difference between this life and that other, which you talk of. The one is present, and we are sure we must provide for the conveniencies of it, or else we are miserable; but the other life we know little or nothing of: however it is at a great distance, and therefore we cannot be presumed to be so immediately concerned about it, especially when such a concernment will contribute nothing to our present enjoyments, but will rather disturb them. Give us the present, and let those that will take care of what is future.

Ay, but, my brethren, do we act thus in other cases? Have we not in all the purchases we make, in all the costs we lay out, nay, in all the projects we drive on in the world; have we not, I say, some regard to the time to come, as well as to the present? Certainly every wise man will consider his future condition, as well as that he is now in; and especially when it is such a condition as he must live in for ever, and that either extremely happily, or extremely miserably; whereas the life he now leads will be gone in a very few years at most: that which is now future, will some time be present, and shall we not have other thoughts when it comes to be so? Shall we not be of another mind when we come to die? Shall we not then sadly reflect upon our past carelessness of eternity, because, forsooth, it was then in futurity? Shall we not then wish we had been less solicitous about our bodies and the affairs of this world, and more minded the concernments of our souls? But

neither indeed is the care of securing our future happiness so impertinent, or so insignificant to our present life, as we make it. On the contrary, it hath a mighty great influence upon the comfortable enjoying of ourselves in this world. He that hath taken all prudent care to secure his eternal estate, must needs lead an infinitely more easy, peaceful, and happy life, than they who do not. All the cross accidents and misfortunes that happen to him (and God knows, no condition of life is free from them) are hereby sweetened and made more supportable. He goes to his work, and minds his worldly business more chearfully; his enjoyments are more sincere, and undisturbed, and free from the allays of bitterness, and grief, and vexation: whereas the man that has this great work still lying upon his hands, the very fears and apprehensions of what will come upon him hereafter (which he cannot for his life rid himself of) will frequently disquiet him, and render his condition, in the best of outward circumstances, very troublesome and uneasy.

But what if this talk of salvation and damnation in another world be but a mere fable? What if there be no such things, but they are only the dreams and fancies of melancholy people, or the fictions of crafty statesmen and priests, the better to bring people under their government? Why should we then be at any pains to deny ourselves any present satisfaction for the sake of them? Pray let us first see some demonstration of the truth of these things.

Though

Though I hope, there are no persons professing Christianity, that will talk at this rate; yet it is to be feared, that there are some, who in their hearts do much doubt the truth of those things we are speaking of. But to such persons, instead of offering them demonstrations to convince them (as indeed matters of this nature are not capable of being demonstrated in a strict sense, though yet, I doubt not, there is such evidence to be given for them, as, in a considering man, will create as full and strong an assent, as if they were really demonstrable. I say, instead of offering them demonstrations) I shall only propose a question or two, to be seriously considered by them, before they abandon themselves to a total neglect and unconcernedness about their spiritual condition.

First, I would ask, Whether there be not some probability that these doctrines are true, *viz.* that there is another life after this; that there is a God, who will bring every man to account for his actions past, and reward him, or punish him, according to his good or evil life? Whether all the testimonies, drawn from the holy Scriptures, the solemn declarations made by our Lord Jesus, who came down from heaven to ascertain us of these things, and the many miracles he wrought for the confirmation of them, his own visible resurrection from the dead, and ascension into heaven; as likewise the many arguments that may be drawn from the notions of our own minds, the justice of God's providence, and the consent of all nations, in all ages, and of all religions,
Jews,

Jews, Turks, Pagans, as well as Christians: I say, whether all these do not at least amount to a probability that these things are true? Now, if it be confessed that these things are probable, will any man in his wits think it reasonable to live as if he was certain there was no such thing? Must he not rather conclude, that it is really his wisest way to do his endeavours to secure his own share of that future happiness, and to avoid the punishments that shall then come upon wicked men, since he acknowledgeth that it is likely, that it is probable, there will come a time of such happiness and such punishments?

But, secondly, if this be too much, if it will not be granted that there is so much as a probability in these things, I would only desire to know, Whether it is possible they should be true? This, sure, the most impudent atheist in the world will not deny: or if he doth, he must shew that it implies a contradiction they should be true, that they have in them a plain repugnancy to the common principles of reason, which sure none will affirm.

If now it be but granted that it is possible there should be another life after this, wherein virtuous religious men shall be for ever happy, and the sensual, the wicked, the profane, for ever tormented: I say, Is it not a man's interest that he should provide accordingly? Would not a man, in common prudence, take some pains to secure his interest in that state; and doth he not run a desperate risque if he do not? For though it were odds there was no such state,

state, yet what if there should prove one? What a condition were the man in then?

It is true, in other cases, where things are not likely to come to pass, we do not often think it reasonable to make provisions against them. But here the case is of such a nature, is of such vast, unspeakable, infinite importance to us, that the very possibility of its happening should, in all reason, put a man upon the using of means for the preventing hazards, especially when the means that are to be used are such as will not in the least make his present life more uncomfortable, or deprive him of any true real pleasure, or convenience, or satisfaction: but, on the contrary, as I said before, will increase his happiness even in this world. Though there was no heaven, no hell, a man loseth nothing that lives as if there were, but is rather a gainer by it: but if there should prove a heaven and a hell, a man loseth infinitely that lives not a religious life, for he is damned to all eternity.

Thus you see, that though we were even infidels, and did not believe another world, yet it would concern us to live as if there was.

But oh! how must this concernment be increased, when it is not only possible, nay, when it is not only highly probable, but when it is absolutely certain that all these things are true! that there *is verily a reward for the righteous*, that there is a hell for the wicked, and that there is a *God that judgeth the earth*. And that all this is so, we may be as certain, as we are certain that we shall all die: and when that time comes (as how shortly and suddenly it may come,

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come, we know not) good Lord, in what a condition shall we be, if we have made no provision for our eternal state!

Oh therefore, my brethren, let us trifle no longer! let us squander away no more of our precious time in idleness, or pleasure, or sensuality, or a course of worldly business, to the neglect of our immortal souls, and their everlasting interests; but let us presently enter upon our great work; *the working out our own salvation, the making our Calling and Election sure*, by breaking loose from all our sins that hold us in captivity, and seriously giving up ourselves to the service of God in all those ways which Jesus Christ hath chalked out to us, *adding to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-kindness and charity; knowing, that if we do these things we shall never fall, but an entrance will be ministred to us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ: to which God of his infinite mercy bring us all, for the sake of the same his dear Son.*

To whom, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N VII.

The great Folly and Danger of delay-
ing Repentance.

Preached before Queen ANNE, in Lent, 1708.

By Archbishop SHARP.

PSAL. cxix. 59, 60.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto
thy testimonies.*

*I made haste and delayed not to keep thy com-
mandments.*

THE following week, which we com-
monly call Passion week, being, of all
the time of Lent, more especially set apart for
the purposes of religion and devotion, for the
examining the state of our souls, and exercising
acts of Repentance, that by deeply consider-
ing what bitter things our Saviour suffered for
our sakes, we may be brought to an abhorrence
of them, and enter into resolutions of forsaking
them

them for ever, and so devote ourselves anew to God on Easter-day by coming to his table: I say, this being the business of this week, I do not know how I can more usefully spend this half hour, than by endeavouring to excite you all to the imitation of this practice of holy David, which you find in the words which I have read unto you. And since there is no difficulty either in the expression, or in the sense of my text, that needs any explaining, I shall apply myself, without more ado, to the thing I design.

I hope there are few of you here present, but have so far, with the psalmist, *thought upon your ways*, that if you have not already *turned your feet unto God's testimonies* (as he here expresseth it;) if you have not already set yourselves to serve God, and to mind the work of religion, yet you are fully convinced, that some time or other you must do it, if you mean not to perish everlastingly: nay, I doubt not but you heartily purpose and resolve, that if God grant you life and health, you will do it. But now why should you not presently put these purposes in execution? Why should you not with David here *make haste, and without further delay*, apply your minds and study to *the keeping of God's commandments*? Why should you not immediately break loose from the sins which hold you in captivity, *and give all diligence*, by a strict, sober, virtuous and devout life, *to make your calling and election sure*? (as the apostle expresses it, 2 Pet. i. 10.) that so, when you come to die, *an entrance may be ministered unto you*
abun-

abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus? ver. 11. Let me therefore, this day, call upon you in the name of God, now while he affords you health and strength, let me exhort you to follow David's example in the text, *to make haste, and delay not to keep God's commandments.*

For the more effectual stirring you up to this, give me leave to represent four things to you, which I shall make the heads of my exhortation :

I. First of all; pray let it be considered, that the longer you delay this work, still the more difficult it will be to you, and the more labour and pains you will be put to, if ever you prosecute it successfully. This all the world must acknowledge to be true upon these two accounts :

1st. The longer you defer this matter, the more unfit you are to undertake it : and 2dly, the work still grows greater upon your hands.

I. First of all, the longer you defer this work, the more unfit you render yourselves for the performance of it. For it is here, as in all other arts and habits, that are to be acquired by exercise and application of mind, the longer we put off any design of that nature, the greater unfitness and incapacity we shall find, even in our natural powers, for the compassing of it. One cannot be thought so capable of becoming a learned man, who begins to study at the age of thirty or forty, as he who hath applied his mind to learning from his childhood. The faculties of a man's soul are in a constant flux,

and the nature of them is such, that the more early we exercise them about any thing, the more prompt we shall find them in it, and the less trouble we shall have in keeping them to it. It just fares with them as with those that learn music. The younger they are when they begin with that art, the more pliable and nimble their fingers are in touching their instrument. But if they stay till their sinews are knit, they will find them much more stiff and unmanageable. How slight soever the comparison is, yet it truly sets forth the state of the powers of mankind, as to the great work of religion. The longer we delay the employing our faculties that way, the more unfit they will be for it; and especially if we neglect the thing so long that nature begins to decline, and the heat and briskness of our spirits do abate. In this case it will be a very hard tug for us to make the powers of our souls in any tolerable degree serviceable to us for the work of religion, in case we have not laid out ourselves in that way before. To which we add further, that all those things which do now indispose us, and render us unfit for the service of God, will more and more do so every day, and consequently we are every day less capable of undertaking the work. Whatsoever is a hindrance of that work to-day, will be so to-morrow, and a greater too. For the longer any of us gives way to any evil affection, or any sinful custom, still the stronger it grows upon us, and still more untoward and uncappable we are of receiving contrary impressions. Let no man flatter himself therefore
with

with such thoughts as these; "I am now indisposed for the pursuing virtue, and living religiously; I have other inclinations, which at present carry away my thoughts and designs, and I cannot easily break loose from them. But I hope in God I shall, some time or other, be in a better humour, and then I will be good, then I will serve God." O man, do not deceive thyself with these vain imaginations! If thou be'st not in humour to be good to-day, thou wilt much less be so to-morrow. For thou wilt always have the same inclinations or affections, or others as bad, to hinder thee, and by thy delays to give check to them, they still grow stronger, and thou growest weaker. In truth, he that defers the amendment of his manners, though it be but for an hour, upon account of his present unfitness, is just in the case of that silly countryman (it is the comparison of an heathen poet) that had a great mind to go over a river, but would stay upon the bank till all the water of it was run out. But there, alas, he may for ever stay, for the river runs on, and will always continue so to do, and possibly with a greater flood.

2. But, secondly, as all delays in this business of keeping God's commandments make us more unfit to go about it, so do they also render the work itself much greater, and consequently more difficult to be performed. It is in this case as with a man, who being bound for a certain place, instead of going the direct way that leads to it, steers his course the quite contrary. Now such a man, if ever he comes to his journey's end, must not only travel through all

those stages, which, if he had taken the direct road, must have been passed by him in order to the arriving where he would be, but he must also tread over again, all those steps that he went wrong; so that by this means you see he hath made his journey much longer than otherwise it would have been, and so much the longer, by how much the farther he hath gone out of the way. We are all of us in this life upon a journey. The place whither we are bound is the kingdom of heaven. The only way that leads thither, is a life of virtue and holiness. Opposite to this is a course of vice and sin, as being the road that leads to hell and destruction. All of us now that pursue this latter course, the further we go in it the more we are out of the way, and consequently the more steps have we to make, the more toil and travel to undergo, if ever we come to our journey's end. This then is all the benefit we reap by continuing on in a course of sin: some time or other we must repent; and the longer we delay it, we have very comfortably heaped up to ourselves so many more and more grievous sins to repent of. And who, alas! but he who feels it, can express the insupportable weight and load that a continued course of sins, with all their aggravating circumstances, doth lay upon the conscience of a man, when it is once seriously awakened. We must all get virtuous habits sooner or later. But by putting the work still off, we have done ourselves this kindness, that the effecting of it will cost us ten times the pains that it would have done, had we begun then when we were first convinced

that

that it was our duty to do it. Where then is the wisdom to defer these things; to multiply our work to that degree, that it may perhaps exceed our utmost strength to perform it; to lay such burdens upon our shoulders, as will possibly endanger the breaking of them? Oh, therefore, let us think, whenever we are tempted to commit a sin, why should I do this action, which, if ever I come to repent of (and I must repent of it, if ever I mean to go to heaven) will cost me sorrow and trouble more than enough? Whenever God puts good thoughts into our hearts, let us say to ourselves, Why should I not now pursue these holy motions, and bring them to some effect? It is certain, if I do it not at all, I am undone; and if I put the thing off till another time, it will be much more difficult for me to do it. Oh, that we were as wise in these our great concerns as we are in every little trifling business of this world; we might save ourselves, God knows how much labour and trouble, which otherwise will unavoidably come upon us, or else that which is a thousand times worse!

H. But to proceed to a second argument, wherewith I would enforce the practice of the text. Easiness and quickness of dispatch is not the only convenience of setting presently upon the work of religion, as neither is the increasing our labour, and the difficulty of the work the only inconvenience of delaying it; but further, let it be considered, that by making haste to keep God's commandments, as David here did, we mightily consult the pleasure and comfort of our following days, as, on the contrary,

by delaying it, we necessarily prepare fears and disquietude, and unavoidable anxieties of mind all our life after. He who long pursues a vicious course, and returns not till the latter end of his days, must never expect either to live or die in so great peace, or so assured a prospect of being happy in the other world, though he be never so diligent and sincere in his religion, as he who begins betimes. All his hopes will be mingled with sad fears of his condition; the sense of the many grievous sins of his life so long persisted in, will still be afflicting his conscience, and he will still be doubtful whether he hath sufficiently repented of them, and whether God hath received him to favour. As he must take greater pains in the working out his salvation than those who engaged early in the business, so must he do it likewise with greater fear and trembling; nay, it may be, he will not be freed from his doubts and perplexities till he finds himself in another state.

This is the unavoidable consequence of putting off the business of religion till our latter days. Why therefore should we not now begin to live so, as when we come to be old, if ever we be so, we shall wish we had lived? Why should we not now in our vigour and strength, make some provisions wherewith to sustain and support ourselves under the burden and infirmities of old age? Why should we, by our present trifling, render the remainder of our life solicitous and uncomfortable, if not full of disquiet, distraction, and amazement? O let us now examine what kind of thoughts we shall have when we come to die! How shall we
then

then wish that we had served God, and given up ourselves to virtue and piety even from our childhood! How shall we regret every year, and every day that we have lavished away in pleasure, or in idleness, or in worldliness, or any other way, to the neglect of our spiritual concerns! The more haste we make to be good, the more shall we then thank God and ourselves for it. But all delay, according to the degree of it, will increase our trouble, and render our everlasting condition more doubtful and unsecure, at least to our own apprehension.

III. Let it be further considered, that by *making haste, without delay, to keep God's commandments*, we do not only more consult the comfort and happiness of our following days, but also our happiness in the future state, which will be so much the greater, by how much the earlier we begun to be religious. This is my third argument, wherewith I would press this point upon you. It is a known truth, that all who are happy in the other world are not equally happy; but there are several degrees of glory there, as *one star differeth from another star in glory*, which is the apostle's comparison, 1 Cor. xv. 41. The righteous judge of the world proportioneth every man's reward to his work; and therefore they who have more retained their innocence in this life, they who have spent more of their time in the service of God, and have been guilty of fewer crimes and interruptions in their duty, and have made greater progress and advancement in all Christian graces and virtues, these will receive a far more glorious crown in the day of judgment,

than they who have misemployed the greatest part of their time and their talents in a course of vanity and sin, and do at last return to wisdom and sobriety. It is not to be imagined, according to the common rules of equity, (tho' we had no divine revelation for it, as yet we have very clearly) that such as have served their lusts, and done the drudgery of Satan for the greatest part of their lives, and at last, when their natural heat and vigour is spent, do change their master, and do list themselves into the service of our Lord Jesus; (though we suppose they are accepted as being sincere in their Repentance, though it was late begun) yet, I say, it cannot be imagined but they will fall extremely short, as to the degree of their happiness, of those who devoted the best of their strength and of their time to God.

This consideration, though it doth concern all men whatsoever, yet doth it in an especial manner concern young persons, such as have a great deal of time before them, as we commonly speak. O how happy would it be for such, if they would seriously lay this matter to heart, before either a habit of carelessness, or sensuality, or worldly-mindedness hath got possession of them. Such persons have yet their fortunes to make, both for this world and the other. What success they may meet with as to their worldly concerns, be they never so diligent in their business, I dare not answer for: for in this world, as Solomon has told us, *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the man of understanding, nor yet favour to men*

of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them
all, Eccles. ix. 11. But then, as to their con-
cernments in the other world, that is not so
doubtful a business; for I dare positively pro-
nounce to them, that they have now such op-
portunities put into their hands, that if they
do make use of them, and improve them as
they should, they cannot fail of laying up to
themselves a great stock both of virtue here,
and of glory and happiness hereafter: far great-
er than that of those who spend the first part of
their life loosely and carelessly, and afterward
begin to bethink themselves, and entertain bet-
ter counsels, all along supposing that they con-
tinue equally diligent. However they may fail
of their worldly aims and designs, yet they can
never be disappointed as to this. We say, and
we say truly, Happy is the man who at any
time of his life doth seriously apply himself to
virtue and goodness; yet it must be owned by
all, that much more happy is he who hath
walked in the paths of virtue from his child-
hood, and hath never made any great wounds
in his conscience, by going astray from his hea-
venly Father in any gross instances, but hath
all along pursued the ways of God with care
and industry from the time that he was first
made acquainted with them. Oh, what a vast
treasure of glory and reward may such a one by
his diligence purchase to himself above other
men! And thus much of my third argument.
But if all this will not prevail upon us to enter
into a consideration of our ways, and without
further delay apply ourselves to the keeping
God's commandments;

IV. Let me, in the last place, beg of you to consider the infinite hazard we all run by neglecting this work, upon account of the great uncertainty of our present lives. We have but such a determinate term allotted to us for the doing our great work in. And this term, at the largest computation, can extend no farther than the time of our lives. And yet is not this time of our lives infinitely uncertain? Are any of us sure we shall be alive a month hence? Have we not almost every day instances presented to us of those who are snatched away by a sudden and unexpected death? Have we not heard of a great many, who, in all appearance, were as sound and healthful as ourselves, and dreamed no more of dying than we do now, who have yet almost in the twinkling of an eye been carried off by an apoplexy, or a fever, or the stroke of an enemy, or the assault of robbers, or some other unavoidable casualty? There are a thousand ways to let out life in a moment; and it is not in the power of the most sagacious prudence either to foresee or to prevent one of them. Who then, that is in his wits, will, upon the presumption that he shall live many years, nay, that he live many weeks longer, put off a business of such vast concernment to him, that if it be not timely taken care of, he is utterly undone to all purposes for evermore? Give me leave to dwell a little upon this argument, and to press it upon you as warmly as I can, and that shall serve for my application at this time.

Since, my brethren, upon this short, this uncertain life, depends our eternal fortune in the

next

next world, how infinitely doth it concern us to trifle no longer! Methinks the very thoughts of this, that upon this single point (for life is but a point, a moment, in comparison of eternity) depends our life for evermore, should awaken the most stupid, insensible man out of his deep sleep of carelessness and sensuality, to a quick and pungent sense of his everlasting interests. Must we be eternally saved or damned by what we do here, and is it not high time for us to begin to look after our own condition? Shall we let day after day, year after year, pass over our heads, and we all the time think of nothing but the present? design nothing but just how to live easily here? nay, perhaps, only how to spend that single day which lies so upon our hands, that we are at a loss for the employing of it? Why, fools that we are, our sand runs on; it runs apace all this while that we are a doing nothing; and we know not how soon the glass will be out. And when it is, good God! what follows? Why, eternity; a bottomless gulph of infinity; that which will never have an end; that which is never capable of a change or alteration. Can we think of this and sit still? Is our day, that fatal, dreadful day of death, so certainly, nay perhaps so suddenly, a coming, and can we live unconcerned? Can we *fold our arms*, and say, with the sluggard, *Yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber?* Prov. vi. 10. Let us yet a little enjoy ourselves, and cast care behind us? Why, methinks the sound of every passing-bell should alarm us. We should not be able to hear that any of our acquaintance, or any of the neighbourhood, is
carried

carried off; but it should strike us to the heart, and put us upon reflecting, Lord, in what a sad condition should I be, if this had been now my case! Whatever company we were in, or whatever business we had upon our hands, whatever designs of worldly profit or advantage we were pursuing, or whatever pleasures or diversions we had prepared to ourselves, yet, methinks, it should be sufficient to blast all these, and to spoil all the content and satisfaction we could expect from them, to have but such a thought as this to come into our minds; "Ay, this would be very well, if it would last always. But, alas! I must be gone, miserable man that I am, I must be gone, and leave all these things behind me. I must be gone to my long home, where I must live for ever, either a perfectly happy man, or the most wretched creature in the world. And God knows which of them will be my lot; I may prove the latter; I may experience what it is to live with everlasting burnings. But as to the former, the state of happiness, that I have made no provision for; but have all my work yet to do." Oh, how killing and unsupportable is such a thought as this! One would think that the reflection upon it would keep us from giving any rest to our heads, or any slumber to our eyes, till we had made some steps towards the securing our everlasting concerns.

But alas! we are not much given to think upon these things; we are a trifling sort of creatures, that love to put the evil day far from us, and to enjoy the present. Let us live to-day; let who will take care of what comes after.

Let us be rich; let us appear somebody in the world; let us live at ease; let us enjoy ourselves and our friends, and let damnation, if it will, come at the conclusion.

O foolish and insensible creatures that we are! Is it thus that we employ our noble faculties of reason and understanding? Is this the use we make of all God's kindness and long-suffering; of all those means he affords us for our good? Yes, this. No better than this, to our shame be it spoken. God, out of pure kindness, gave us our beings, and sent us hither for no other end, but that after a short and tolerably comfortable life here, we should live with him in eternal blessedness hereafter. Accordingly he has not been wanting in any thing that might minister to these purposes. He doth afford us health, and strength, and reason, and conscience, and memory, for the carrying on this great work. He orders all the creatures of the visible world to be at our service while we are a doing it. The sun fails not to give us light. The earth fails not to yield her fruits of increase. The beasts, the fowls, the fishes, the whole creation doth daily minister to our supports, and conveniences; and delights: nay, the inhabitants of the invisible world think not themselves too good to attend upon mankind, for the preserving them from their spiritual enemies, and advancing this their great work of eternity. But, which is more than all this, God sends his own Son to live and to die for us. And the gospel of his everlasting salvation he hath taken care shall be daily sounding in our ears. We are told of our faults, and we are directed into the right way, and we

we are called upon continually to pursue it. The holy spirit of God does daily solicit and importune our souls, as well by his holy word and the outward administrations of the church, as by his inward motions to remember what we were born to; and what God expects from us, and at least to yield up our hearts and lives to his divine conduct, and to render ourselves happy; by an entire closing with God Almighty's most gracious proposals: and lastly, to say no more, the providence of God doth continually watch over us, and takes occasion, by the actions, and events, and contingencies that happen to us almost every day of our lives, to put us in mind of our great concernments; to check us in our foolish career of vice and sin; to wean our affections from their unreasonable fondnesses to this world, and the vanities of it; and to bring us to a true sense of what we came hither for. All this God hath done, and doth daily for us. How now do we improve these blessed opportunities? What returns do we make to God for such unspeakable mercies? Why, in truth, it is a very sad and melancholy thing to give an answer to this question. Several there are among us, God be praised, that do make a right use of these blessings, and do seriously and carefully pursue an holy life, in order to their eternal happiness hereafter. And blessed of God be all such, and certainly for ever blessed shall they be of the Lord. But it must be confessed, that these are but few in comparison of the bulk of mankind. The generality of men, I doubt, are of another mind, and take other measures.

Give

Give me leave to speak freely about this matter. Some there are among us, who laugh and scoff at all those things we are talking of; and look upon all this business of another world as a made story, for the frightening silly and timorous people. Very wise, and grave, and learned men are they in the mean time. But I defy any of them to be able to arrive at this depth of thinking or talking, till by a course of vice and sensuality they have quite defaced the natural principles of their minds, and have scarce a spark of man remaining in them. Others there are, who make it their business to keep their heads continually hot with drink and company, that their consciences may not be made uneasy, nor their minds disturbed with such troublesome reflections, as they certainly would be, if they were but suffered to cool, and had the leisure calmly to reflect on these things. Others, partly through custom, and partly through their worldly inclinations, have so fettered and entangled themselves with a crowd of business and secular affairs, that that is always running in their heads, nor have they time to attend to any other matters. And others among us are altogether immersed in brutish and sensual lusts, and have no more sense of any thing that is not flesh and blood, than goats or satyrs. Lastly, others are rather silly and unthinking, than grossly wicked; they do believe these things, and often with reflection and concernedness enough call them to mind. But they do not know how, they are fatally overborne with something or other from seriously and industriously pursuing the eternal welfare

welfare of their souls, though they are apprehensive enough how much it doth concern them. Their comfort is, they mean well, and their lives are not very bad; and they hope, some time or other, they shall have the grace to apply themselves closely to the business of a religious, and serious, and devout life; though at the present they cannot but own they lead a very careless one, having no sense of God or religion upon their minds, as to their common conversation.

This last sort of people, now as they are (we thank God) the most in number; so are they the most hopeful of any of those I have now named; and therefore to these chiefly do I at this time apply my discourse.

You believe there is a God and a devil. You believe that there is a heaven for pious and virtuous persons to be rewarded in; and a hell, in which all vicious and wicked men shall be everlastingly punished. And you are sensible likewise, that, according to the preparations you make in this life, so shall you have your portion in the one, or in the other: nay, so far are you sensible of this, that you seriously think, some time or other, of calling yourselves to account for your life past, and reforming whatever is amiss in you, and making it your business to live more strictly, and virtuously, and religiously, than ever you have yet done. Why all this is very well. But why, in God's name, do you defer it? Why do not you go about it presently? Can you consider, that upon your behaviour in this life depends your whole eternity; and can you after this think it reasonable

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to neglect a day longer the securing that infinite concernment? What is it you do expect? Do you hope for clearer revelations of God's will in this matter? or more powerful assistances from his spirit? Alas! it is in vain. God hath made his last discoveries by Jesus Christ; nor are you ever to think of other motives, or other assistances, than what are made to you in the Gospel, and which you have had already some experience of. And those too may fail you, if you do still continue to neglect or abuse them when God offers them to you. Do not deceive yourselves, God hath done all that is necessary; nay, all that is fit and convenient for his part to do towards your salvation. And if you will still harden your hearts, and stand out against his gracious tenders of mercy, your ruin will lie wholly at your own doors.

But perhaps you may think you shall be fitter for that serious work some time hence, when you have dispatched some other affairs, that your hearts and hands are now full of. But this I have already shewn you is a vain imagination, it being certain, as I said, that every day of your life that you defer this business, it will still grow more difficult, and you will be less able to undertake it. But after all, you do not consider, that all this while you are demurring and putting off this work, I say, you do not consider what title command you have of your own life. You are now in health, and you think that by the course of nature you may live many years. But what if you should not? What if you should die a year hence, or a month hence? (as it is odds but that several that now hear

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me will be gone to their long home before another annual revolution be come about.) Nay, what if, while you are saying to yourselves, with the rich man in the Gospel, *Soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*, you should hear a voice, saying, *O fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee?* Luke xii. 19, 20. O, in what a miserable condition would you then be! It is in vain then to begin your work, for that is the time it should be concluded. It is in vain to beg for longer time, for the decree of heaven is passed upon you: you must go, though you be never so unwilling. If indeed you had any art, any skill, any power to prevail with death, or to oblige those, in whose hands your life is, to spare you, and give you longer time, you would say something. But this you cannot do, nay, you know you cannot do it. You come hither upon the same terms and conditions that all other people do. And you know that every man's life is at the mercy of a thousand accidents every day.

Oh, Lord, then what intolerable nonsense is it, to put off the greatest business we have to do in the world, that business, which, if it be not taken care of, we are undone for evermore, in hopes of the continuance of a life, which we are not certain, no, nor is it possible we should have any certainty, that it will continue for a year; no, nor for a month; no, nor for a day. God Almighty give us grace so to consider these things, that we may all of us immediately *think of our ways, and turn our feet unto his testimonies, that we may make haste, and without further delay, enter upon the keeping his commandments.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

Self-examination explained and recommended.

By the Rev. Mr. CLARK.

PROV. iv. 26.

Ponder the path of thy feet; and let all thy ways be established.

WHEN I consider that I am addressing a number of rational and immortal beings, whose eternal state depends upon the right improvement of the present life, a charge like this in the text may seem almost needless. What! reasonable creatures, and not consider? Is it possible they should not ponder the path of their feet? Is it possible they should be unconcerned about their happiness, or negligent in the pursuit of it? Alas! how incredible soever this may seem, sad experience will oblige us to acknowledge, that this is in fact the case with the greater part of mankind. Though formed capable of reflection and foresight, they live in this respect like the

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brutes, who are void of understanding ; scarce ever considering the end of their being, or examining their conduct. They are engaged in a perpetual round of gaiety and folly, or immersed in the cares and business of life, and have not one hour to spare for serious thought and recollection. One vain pursuit succeeds another, till an habitual levity takes possession of the mind, and renders it altogether incapable of making any advances in wisdom and virtue. Thus they spend their days, without knowing the true enjoyment of life, and without answering the great ends of their being ; till at length death closes the scene, and calls them to a world, where (when it is too late) they will be convinced of their egregious folly, and wish, but wish in vain, their state of trial might be renewed.

Such are the fatal consequences of Inconsideration, that foe to honour and usefulness, parent of vice and misery, source of all that self-deceit, which blinds men's eyes, and leads them on to their own destruction.

The wise man, who had thoroughly studied human nature, knew but too well the dreadful and extensive effects of this principle ; and therefore uses his utmost endeavours to secure mankind from its influence. For this purpose, he calls upon them in the most earnest and affectionate manner to attend to the precepts of divine wisdom ; and describes in lively colours the character of the simple and inconsiderate, who runs heedlessly on, and exposes himself to every temptation. And to give the greater weight

weight to these representations, he elsewhere sets before us in a striking light, the piercing anguish and remorse which such persons will feel at the hour of death, from a reflection on their own foolish and thoughtless conduct.—In the passage before us, he particularly recommends that branch of consideration, which more immediately relates to our own temper and character, and is usually called Self-examination. The figure, under which this precept is expressed, is very frequent in the sacred writings, and is taken from a traveller, who carefully observes his steps and attends to the road, that he may avoid any danger to which he apprehends himself exposed. Thus in our journey through life, it behoves us to examine well the path in which we are walking; to consider whither it will lead us, and what advances we have made in it: or in other words, it is our wisdom to look into our own hearts, to enquire seriously and impartially into the state of religion in our minds; that we may form a true judgment of our real character in the sight of God, and may be the better able to regulate our future conduct.

As this advice is of so much importance to our religious interests, let me bespeak your attention, while I attempt,

- I. To explain the precept in the text.
- II. To shew the advantages that will arise from the observance of it.

And III. Give some directions to assist you in the practice of it.

I. I am to explain the precept in the text,
Ponder the path of thy feet.

Now this implies in the general, such a thorough examination of ourselves, and such a habit of close reflection upon our own conduct, as may secure us from any fatal miscarriages, and may assist our progress in religion. More particularly,

1. It includes a serious enquiry into our past conduct.

I mean not that every single action is to be recollected and examined. As this is impossible in itself, so neither is it necessary in order to answer the end proposed. It is the general tenor of our conduct by which we are to judge ourselves, since we are assured this will be the rule of future judgment. We are to consider then, whether this has been agreeable to our character as Men and as Christians; agreeable to the dictates of right reason, and the precepts of the gospel. Have we been prudent and circumspect, regular and conscientious in our behaviour; or have we blindly followed our own inclinations and the corrupt customs and manners of the world around us? Have we studied to adorn our holy profession, by a blameless and exemplary conversation, or have we not rather exposed it to disgrace?

We should reflect in what manner we have filled up the several relations in which we stand to God and our fellow-creatures. Have we been concerned to maintain that inward veneration for the divine perfections, that sense of our dependance on God, and that gratitude for his

his favours, that humble submission to the appointments of his providence, with that entire subjection to his authority and laws; which may so justly be expected by the blessed God, as our creator, preserver, benefactor, and governor? Have we endeavoured to cultivate sentiments of love, duty, and esteem, towards our blessed Redeemer, agreeable to the excellence of his character, and the importance of the benefits he has conferred upon us? Have we set a just value on the blessings he has promised to his faithful disciples, and have we been solicitous to obtain an interest in them? Has it been our prevailing concern to search out and obey his will as our great law-giver, and to follow his steps as our captain and leader? And finally, have we preserved a due regard to his mediation and intercession in our religious services, being sensible of our own unworthiness, and that in his name alone we can draw near to God, with hopes of acceptance? Again, in our intercourse with mankind, let us impartially consider what part we have acted. Have we upon all occasions strictly observed the laws of justice and honesty? Are we chargeable with no secret fraud or allowed guile? Have we in no instance taken advantage of the weakness or ignorance of others, to over-reach and deceive them; but has the love we bear ourselves, been the standard by which we have regulated our conduct towards our brethren? Have we at all times preserved that inviolable regard to truth and faithfulness, sincerity and uprightness, which becomes a

Christian? Have we abounded in the exercise of brotherly love and charity, cherishing a sincere affection for all our brethren, and cheerfully contributing every thing in our power to their assistance and relief? And lastly, have we conscientiously discharged the duties that belong to the particular relations in life in which we are placed? Let those especially who are at the head of families ask themselves, whether they have been careful to instruct and watch over those committed to their charge; and by their example and influence, to train them up in the ways of religion. And let us all examine, whether we have behaved with becoming prudence and fidelity, affection and tenderness, towards those with whom we are connected, and have been sincere in our endeavours to promote both their temporal and religious interests.

Let us farther enquire, how we have acquitted ourselves in the several parts of self-government: whether we have been steady and uniform in practising the duties of temperance and sobriety, purity and chastity, meekness and humility, resolution and fortitude: whether we have taken pains to watch over our hearts, to restrain those irregular desires and inclinations which have at any time arisen, and to encourage and strengthen every pious and virtuous affection: and finally, whether we have been diligent in our own business, careful to redeem our time, and faithful in improving the talents entrusted with us, for the service of God and our fellow-creatures.

To all which should be added, a serious examination into the care with which we have improved the means of religion that have been put into our hands: whether we have been constant and sincere in the exercises of devotion both in public and private, and have made conscience of attending all the ordinances of divine appointment: and to conclude, whether it has been our earnest endeavour, by the study of the Scriptures, by meditation and prayer, to encrease in our acquaintance with divine truths, and to make greater attainments in every part of the Christian character.

Such are the enquiries which must qualify us for passing a right judgment upon ourselves; and which are comprehended under the general exhortation given in the text. But to render this examination effectual, it will be necessary to descend to such particulars under each head, as are suited to our own case; not resting in general enquiries, which may easily mislead and deceive us.

If upon taking this review of our conduct through life, we should see reason to hope that in the main it has been agreeable to our profession; yet, as we shall certainly recollect many instances in which we have deviated from the path of our duty, it becomes us to enquire, whether we have been truly humbled for our sins before God; whether we have confessed them with a deep repentance and sorrow of heart, and have had recourse to the pardoning mercy and grace of God through his Son. This is the only foundation, on which we can

reasonably build our hopes of the divine favour and acceptance, amidst the many sins and infirmities that attend us ; and without this merciful provision, the enquiry that has been recommended would only serve to throw us into despair. — But to proceed : the precept in the text may also imply,

2. A diligent Examination of the motives of our conduct, and the principal ends we have pursued in life.

It is from hence our actions take their colour ; and consequently an attention to these is absolutely necessary to Self-acquaintance. It is this perhaps that constitutes the chief difference between a truly religious person, and a man of the world : their outward behaviour may be, in many respects, nearly the same ; but the principles on which they act are widely different : while the one is governed by a sense of duty, and a regard to the divine authority, the other is swayed merely by views of temporal interest and a desire of recommending himself to his fellow-creatures. It must be owned indeed, that, amidst the great variety of motives by which we are actuated, it is often difficult, in particular instances, exactly to determine which has the preference. Thus perhaps we may be at a loss to know, whether those actions, which our partiality and self-love have inclined us to ascribe to a sincere regard for the honour of God and the good of mankind, did not really proceed from vain glory, and a concern for our own reputation in the eye of the world. But though this should
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render us more strict and impartial in our researches, that we may not be deceived by that self-flattery to which we are so prone to listen, it can by no means be admitted as an excuse for neglecting the enquiry. The more we accustom ourselves to attend to the secret springs of our conduct, the more easy and natural it will become. Besides, the examination here recommended, relates not so much to any one particular action, as to the great end we propose to ourselves, and the leading principle by which we are governed through life. And this one would imagine might without much difficulty be ascertained, by one who was sincerely desirous to know the truth, and had been used to make observations on his own character.

Let us enquire then, what kind of motives have had the chief share in determining our conduct; whether those which religion points out, or which are recommended by the example of the world around us. Let us particularly attend to the state of our mind; when we have been deliberating upon any important affair, and carefully observe what were the considerations that had the greatest weight with us: for though we are not to form our judgment from any single action, however important, yet a diligent attention to what passes in the mind on such occasions, will be of great use to assist us in discovering the general principles by which we are governed.

Now the great end which religion teaches us to keep in view, is that which, in the language

guage of Scripture, is called the *glory of God*; * by a regard to which we are in general to understand such a prevailing sense of the divine authority, and such an unfeigned desire of the divine approbation, as shall lead us to honour him by a conformity to his will. This motive is of all others the most extensive, and where it has its due place in the mind, will prove the most effectual means of regulating the conduct. The most indifferent actions, when proceeding from such views, acquire a kind of sanctity; and the value of every good work is greatly heightened and encreased. Let us reflect then, what influence this principle has had upon our minds. Have we above all things been concerned to approve ourselves in the sight of

* When the Glory of God, or any other general principle of the like nature, is recommended as the governing motive of our actions, it is by no means designed to exclude those motives that are of the social and benevolent kind from any share in determining our conduct. A regard to the welfare and happiness of our fellow-creatures, is certainly a noble principle, and is really inseparable from a sincere desire of approving ourselves in the sight of God: nor can it be conceived, that a person who has a strong sense of duty and the divine authority, can be destitute of love to mankind. Nevertheless, as those motives that are drawn more immediately from religion, have a more extensive influence than any other, because they take in the whole compass of our duty, it seems most proper to represent these as the great ends we should propose to ourselves in life, and the measure by which we should regulate our conduct. And accordingly the Scriptures always teach us to consider ourselves, as the subjects of divine government, and direct us to look upon his will, as the rule of our actions. The several branches of virtue are enjoined upon us as the laws of our sovereign, whom it is both our duty and our interest to obey. And though another way of representing things might have been more soothing to human vanity, yet fact and experience prove, that this is most suited to the real state of human nature, and the circumstances in which we are placed.

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God? Have the desire of his acceptance and favour, and the dread of his displeasure, had more weight with us than the opinion of the world, the gratifying our own inclinations, or the prospect of any temporal interest? If in any instance there has been a competition between these different motives, have we given the former the preference? Or on the contrary, have these great ends been seldom or never taken into the question; while our whole attention has been confined to the securing our worldly interest, or pursuing our sensual pleasures? Enquire yet farther, have we *set the Lord always before us*, and have we been as watchful over our conduct, when no eye but that of heaven has been witness to our actions, as when they have been exposed to public view? Have we made conscience of our thoughts, and the secret purposes of the mind, as well as our outward behaviour? In a word, have we lived as creatures who are accountable to their Lord and Master; and have we made his will, and not our own, the great rule of our life and actions? Thus let us search into our own hearts, that we may as far as possible discover the principle by which we are governed; and may from hence judge in some measure, to what class we belong, whether of those who *walk after the flesh*, and are *conformed to this world*, being under the influence of sensual worldly motives; or of those who *walk after the spirit*, and are *transformed in the renewing of their minds*, being actuated by higher views than those of sense.

Perhaps

Perhaps it may be thought by some, that to maintain such a constant regard to the Divine Being through the whole course of life, is too high an attainment for the generality of mankind; and that, considering the variety of cares and concerns which necessarily engage their attention, it is not to be expected they should act upon such refined and exalted principles. To this I would answer, that it is not required of us, to have these motives at all times actually present to the mind, or that in every single action we should have an eye to, and intend the glory of God. But certainly none can say it is impossible, even amidst all the cares and pleasures of life, to preserve such an habitual regard to the divine presence, as may prove a guard upon the mind in an hour of temptation, and may support and animate us in the discharge of our duty. Thus, (to pursue the allusion in the text) a traveller has not his thoughts every moment fixed upon the end of his journey; and yet this is that which really directs every step, and is the point to which he is continually tending.

Another branch of Self-examination, and which may assist us in making this enquiry into the ends and motives of our actions, is,

3. To consider attentively what our ruling-passion is, and what influence it has had in determining our conduct.

Every man has something peculiar in the make or constitution of his mind, which inclines him more strongly to some pursuits than to others, and which consequently lays him more open

open to temptations from that quarter, than from any other. In some, the love of pleasure, in others, the desire of gain, and a fordid attachment to their worldly interest has the ascendancy. Some minds that can look with contempt on sensual gratifications or the acquisition of wealth, are yet enslaved to pride and ambition; they are struck with the charms of grandeur and power, and to this they can sacrifice their ease, their pleasures, and every other pursuit: or if their station in life should forbid any such expectations, yet the same temper will shew itself in fondness for praise and for being distinguished above those in the same rank. In others again, the love of ease and self-indulgence prevails over all other considerations; which at the same time that it secures them from those irregularities into which others are hurried by their passions, renders them altogether useless to the world, and takes away the true enjoyment of life. Some tempers are more prone to anger and resentment, whilst others are of a milder and softer turn. Some persons are naturally inclined to acts of liberality and beneficence; whilst others, even from the original constitution of their minds, are disposed to be saving and frugal, and are obliged to put a force upon themselves, when from a sense of duty they perform any acts of charity.

Now amidst this variety of tempers, wherever any one of them prevails, it will have a great effect upon the whole of a man's conduct, and will give a colour to all his actions. Those duties that more immediately oppose
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this reigning disposition will seem peculiarly difficult, and will cost him many painful struggles; while those that fall in with, or however do not contradict it, will require little or no self-denial.

It is evident therefore, that in order to know our true character, it is necessary to be acquainted with this part of our constitution, and seriously to examine what share it has had in determining our conduct. Perhaps, upon such a survey, we shall often find that pride, or covetousness, the love of pleasure, or whatever else is our reigning passion, had much more weight with us in many of our resolutions, than those noble motives that have been suggested. It is no wonder indeed, if this should in some instances have gained the ascendancy. An enemy, that is continually renewing his attacks, will, it is probable, find some unguarded moment, in which he may succeed. But the grand question is, what has been our general conduct in this respect. Has it been our habitual concern to guard against the influence of this unhappy bias in our temper? Have we treated it as our enemy, and sincerely endeavoured by the exercise of resolution and self-denial, and by earnest prayer, to weaken and overcome it? Have we carefully avoided whatever might tend to irritate and encrease the evil; and if in any instance it has gained an advantage over us, has it been the matter of our grief and lamentation before God, and have we been so much the more watchful and circumspect? If we are conscious of hav-
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ing acted this part, a good foundation will be laid for inward satisfaction and confidence. But if, on the contrary, we have suffered these dangerous principles to gather strength by indulgence; if we have without concern seen them enter into all our determinations, and prevail even against the dictates of religion and conscience, we have great reason to fear that our hearts have not been right with God.

Another particular comprehended under the precept of the wise-man is,

4. A diligent enquiry into the present temper and state of our minds.

By which I mean, not that particular frame or disposition, which may chance to prevail at the time when the enquiry is made; and which being variable and uncertain, and depending upon many accidental circumstances, can afford no sufficient rule by which to judge of our real character; but that which is become the settled purpose and resolution of the mind, the prevailing bent of the will and affections. Whatever has been our temper or behaviour in time past, what is it now? If we have heretofore *followed divers lusts and vanities*, are we now convinced of the folly of such pursuits; and are we come to a full determination of giving up ourselves sincerely and without reserve to the service of God? Is it the language of our hearts, *O Lord our God, though other lords have had dominion over us, henceforth by thee only will we make mention of thy name?* If, xxvi. 13.

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Let us examine in what light sin appears to us. Once perhaps we were ready to esteem it a light matter, and were but little sensible of its malignity, or apprehensive of its consequences: Are we now convinced of its baseness and deformity as well as its fatal effects? Is there a settled hatred of it rooted in our breast, and an habitual purpose not to indulge it? Do we carefully guard against those temptations to which we are most exposed, and do we feel a holy fear of being seduced and ensnared through the deceitfulness of sin? Is our conscience awake and sensible? Is it easily alarmed at the apprehension of danger? Does it reproach us for the least deviation from our duty; and does it faithfully set before us the terrors of the Lord, in order to make us more watchful and circumspect?

Consider farther, what are our sentiments of the law of God? Do we not only approve of it as holy, just and true, in our judgment and understanding, but do we feel an inward practical conviction of its excellence? Do we assent to all its precepts, even those that are most contrary to our inclination or interest, and is it our fixed resolution to make them the rule of our life and actions? Do we *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, and is it our earnest desire to be more entirely conformed to the divine will? Can we lay our hand upon our hearts and say, that we would not upon any consideration knowingly and wilfully transgress any one of the divine commands: that we are ready to deny ourselves every gratification that shall appear inconsistent with

with our duty, and to give up every temporal advantage that may have proved a snare to us? In a word, is it our deliberate purpose to sacrifice every thing for the sake of a good conscience, and to make religion and the securing our immortal interest, our first and great concern? Perhaps we may secretly intend only a partial obedience, and may hope that by parting with some sins, we may be allowed the more freely to indulge ourselves in others. But let us beware that we are not thus deceived; for it is certain, even from the very nature of religion, as well as from the express declarations of Scripture, that nothing less than sincere and universal obedience will be accepted. *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, (i. e. allowedly and deliberately) he is guilty of all;* (James ii. 10.) as it plainly appears that he is not influenced by a sense of the divine authority, even in those instances in which he observes the law, since the same obligation equally extends to the whole.

Again, let us inquire, how we stand affected towards the great objects of faith. Do we feel a deep sense of their importance? Are we concerned to maintain a prevailing regard to things invisible and eternal, or does this world and its affairs take up all our time and thoughts? Do we consider ourselves as pilgrims and strangers here, who must soon remove hence; and are we chiefly solicitous while we continue here to prepare for that everlasting state on which we are entering? Once more, let us examine

what notions we have formed of happiness. Do we esteem the pleasures and enjoyments of the present life as our chief good; or the favour of God, the peace of our own consciences, and the prospect of eternal blessedness? Which of these is the great object of our hopes and wishes? Can we say, in the sublime language of the prophet, *Though the fig-tree should not blossom, and there should be no fruit in the vine; though the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields yield no meat; though the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation.* Habakk. iii. 17, 18. If this is in any degree our prevailing temper, we have reason to hope that we are possessed of that *spiritual mind which is life and peace*: But if all our wishes and desires centre here, if the pleasures and pursuits of this life constitute all the happiness we aim at, there is too much room to fear that we have that *carnal mind, which is enmity against God*, and which must disqualify us for being admitted to his presence.

5. The Examination recommended in the text, must be accompanied with a sincere resolution and a correspondent endeavour by divine assistance, to reform the errors of our past life, and to make continual advances in virtue and goodness.

This is the great end for which this self-enquiry is designed; and unless this end be answered, all our pains and labour will be lost. Indeed one would imagine it could scarce fail

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of producing this happy effect, if it were performed with closeness and impartiality. For whoever will allow himself to reflect seriously, on any instance of misconduct with which he has been chargeable, must condemn himself, and wish to correct it for the future. And this conviction, if it be founded on right principles, will engage him to humble himself before God, to implore his pardoning mercy according to the terms of the gospel, and to entreat those supplies of his grace, by which he may be assisted in his struggles with sin, and purified from every defilement. And when he has once proceeded thus far, a happy foundation is laid for a sincere amendment.

In this manner then should we improve that enquiry into our own character which has been described; carefully attending to those instances in which we have gone astray, marking the occasions of our error, and maintaining a holy caution and jealousy over ourselves, that we be not again drawn away and ensnared. Especially should we guard against those sins by which we are most easily beset, and to which from our natural temper and constitution we perceive ourselves most strongly inclined. We must labour, by the exercise of continual watchfulness and self-denial, joined with earnest prayer, to suppress every sinful desire, to restrain every inordinate affection, and to correct all those evil habits which we may have formed. We should carefully observe wherein we have been defective in the discharge of our duty, and set ourselves to perform it with greater diligence

ligence and resolution. If in any respects we have been barren and unprofitable, we should consider how we may become more useful in the world, how we may fill up our respective stations in life with greater advantage; and should be concerned more faithfully and zealously to improve whatever talents are entrusted with us. If we perceive the principle of divine love too weak and languid, and incapable of resisting the force of appetite and passion, we should endeavour to strengthen it by a more frequent contemplation of the divine perfections, and especially the displays of his goodness and love. And thus, if, upon a like survey, we find that we are too much under the influence of a narrow selfish temper, we should take every method to cherish a more sincere and disinterested affection for our brethren; we should accustom ourselves to enter into their concerns, to interest ourselves in their welfare, to sympathize with them under their distresses, and to perform every kind and benevolent office for them in our power. Thus should it be our sincere endeavour, in dependance on those divine aids which we are taught to expect, not only to subdue and mortify all the irregular passions and propensities of our nature, but to cultivate every pious and virtuous affection, and to make continual advances towards that perfection of character, to which it was the design of the Christian religion to raise us.

Having thus explained the precept in the text, let us now,

II. Consider the advantage that will attend the practice of it. This

This is expressed in the latter clause of the text, *Let all thy ways be established*, or as it might be rendered, *that all thy ways may be established*. Which (as we have already observed) alludes to the safety and pleasure with which a person travels, when he pays a proper attention to his steps, and conveys a lively idea. —It implies that steadiness and uniformity of conduct, which is the result of habitual consideration and reflection.

1. That this will be a probable means of securing us from all fatal errors and miscarriages; or of restoring us to the path of duty, if we have wandered from it.

Consideration is the first step to amendment. *I thought on my ways*, (says the Psalmist) *and turned my feet unto thy testimonies*, Psal. cxix.

59. When the sinner looks within, and contemplates the state of his mind and the situation to which he is reduced: when he reflects on the hateful nature of sin, the injury that is thereby offered to the divine authority, and the base ingratitude he has been guilty of against his best friend and unwearied benefactor: when he attentively considers the vanity of those sinful pleasures, to which he has sacrificed his hopes of heaven; and surveys the dreadful prospect that lies before him; he can hardly avoid feeling a deep sense of shame and remorse, and will be anxious to know how he may escape the danger to which he is exposed, and obtain forgiveness and reconciliation from God. To confirm the justice of this remark, we may observe, that those who indulge

themselves in the pursuit of unlawful pleasures cannot bear reflection. They are never so miserable as when alone ; and fly to company as a shelter from themselves, and the upbraidings of their own minds. Whereas if they were wise enough calmly to attend to the remonstrances of conscience, they might be restored from the error of their way, and led into the paths of righteousness and peace.

On the other hand, frequent Self-examination would preserve us from those irregularities of temper and conduct, into which the thoughtless and inconsiderate are easily betrayed ; and amidst all the storms of life, would effectually secure us from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Being thoroughly acquainted with our own strength, (which will be the consequence of following the advice that has been given) we shall learn not rashly to expose ourselves to danger ; and being continually on our guard, we shall not be easily surprised by temptation. If we are at any time attacked by the enemy, that habit of reflection we have formed will make it natural for us to call to mind those great motives of religion, which may assist us in standing our ground ; and while we are faithfully exerting our own endeavours, we are encouraged to hope for those influences from above, which will give us a compleat victory, and cause the tempter to flee from us.

A careful attention to our own conduct would likewise tend to secure us from the instances of imprudence and indiscretion, into which even good men have often fallen, and by which they have brought disgrace upon their profession.

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The man of reflection will look well to his goings; will be solicitous to act on every occasion, whether of greater or lesser importance, agreeably to his station and character; and while his *first* care is to keep a good conscience towards God, his *next* concern will be to provide things decent and honourable in the sight of all men.

2. We may add to this, that such a habit of reflection will confirm and strengthen the mind, and enable us to make continual advances in holiness.

As it will teach us to watch against every rising passion, and to guard against the least appearance of evil; so it will establish our good resolutions, and secure us from that fickleness of conduct, which betrays a weak mind and is so prejudicial to our religious interests. Our *righteousness* will not then be like the morning cloud and the early dew, which soon pass away, (Hos. vi. 4.) and disappoint the hopes which they had raised: but will resemble the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18. When a person has deliberately weighed the motives of his actions, and formed his determination upon a careful survey of the consequences of things, it is not likely that he will be easily moved from his purpose. He will by degrees form a habit of resolution and steadiness in the adhering to the dictates of reason and conscience, which no temptation will be able to break through. He will learn to practise self-denial, and to endure hardship, as becomes a good soldier of Jesus Christ; and will be rendered exemplary

in every part of the Christian character. As he is frequently reviewing the several branches of his duty, and comparing his own temper and conduct with them; as he is solicitous to reform whatever he finds amiss, and to excell in every thing that is truly valuable and praiseworthy; it may reasonably be expected, that under the influences of the Spirit of God, he will make considerable advances in the divine life; while by his wisdom and moderation, joined with his zeal and activity in the service of God, he reflects a distinguished lustre upon his sacred profession. Yet amidst his superior attainments, that self-knowledge which he has acquired will keep him *humble*. The more thoroughly he is acquainted with his own heart, the more sensible will he be of his own imperfections, and consequently the less reason will he find for pride and self-sufficiency. That "pride was not made for man," is written on every part of our frame, and he that is yet to learn this lesson is a stranger to himself.—And to conclude, as the natural effect of this progress in religion, the mind will enjoy true peace and solid satisfaction; being unruffled by the storms of passion, and secure from the stings of conscience, it possesses that sacred heart-felt joy, which the world cannot give, *that peace of God, which passeth all understanding.*

S E R M O N IX.

Self-examination explained and recommended.

SECOND PART.

By the Rev. Mr. CLARK.

PROV. iv. 26.

Ponder the path of thy feet; and let all thy ways be established.

THUS saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways, Hag. i. 5, 7. This admonition was given by the prophet Haggai, in the name of God, to the Jews, after their return from the Babylonish captivity, in order to stir them up to greater diligence and zeal in rebuilding the temple; which it appears they had greatly neglected, whilst their whole attention was confined to their own private concerns, and they seemed only solicitous to live at ease and enjoy themselves. To shew the great importance of the admonition, it is repeated a verse or two after, and introduced with

with the same solemnity. It is a pleasure to find that it was not without its desired effect : for the history informs us, that *Zerubbabel and the remnant of the people obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the people did fear before the Lord*, Hag. i. 12. And is not the same general charge equally applicable to each of us? Which of us, Christians, does, not need to be called upon to the exercise of greater watchfulness and circumspection in our conduct? Are we conscious to no inward disorders, no irregularities of temper, or imperfections in our character which should render Self-examination and serious reflection needful? And though the exhortation be not indeed addressed immediately to us, as it was to the Jews, *in the name of God*, yet since both reason and religion point it out as our duty, we must be convinced that we are bound to pay the same regard to it.

In a former discourse on this subject, we have considered the nature of that self-enquiry, which is recommended in the text; and have described it as consisting in a careful review of our past conduct; a particular examination of the principles or motives, on which we have acted through life; together with an enquiry into our leading or ruling passion, and the influence it has had in determining our conduct; to which we added, a diligent observation of the present temper and state of the mind; and a sincere resolution and endeavour to rectify what has been amiss, and to make greater advances in religion. We then proceeded to illustrate

illustrate the argument by which the precept is here enforced, *thy ways shall be established*: and observed in the first place, that it will be a means of securing us from any fatal errors and miscarriages; or of restoring us to the right path, if we have wandered from it. And secondly, that it will greatly tend to strengthen and establish the mind, and consequently promote our improvement in the Christian temper and character.—I am now,

III. To give some directions that may assist us in the performance of what has been recommended.

I. Set yourself as in the presence of God. Retire from the world, and exclude the affairs of it as much as possible from your mind. It is true, they will often return to embarrass or dissipate the thoughts; but if resolutely and constantly opposed, the difficulty will certainly lessen. Every one is sensible of the effect which the presence of a wise and good man whom we esteem, has upon the mind, to restrain the roivings of the imagination, and to fix the attention. How much greater influence should the consideration of that all-perfect being have upon us, who is intimately acquainted with the secrets of our hearts! Shall we not dread to think of appearing with irreverence before our maker and our judge? Let us endeavour then to compose our minds, to collect our thoughts, and consider his eye as immediately upon us, and observing how we conduct ourselves in this important inquiry. If we are sincere and faithful in these researches,
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he will behold us with complacency, and will be ready to impart divine influences from above, to render our endeavours successful. Let us consider our Redeemer likewise, as looking down upon us from the height of his glory, and tenderly concerned for our welfare. He is represented as *walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks: his eyes are as flames of fire*, which penetrate the inmost recesses of the soul; and we are assured that he employs that extensive power with which he is invested, to promote the purity and perfection of his church, that he may present it at last without spot or wrinkle to his Father, with exceeding great joy. Let us study to approve ourselves in his sight, that he may see in us of the travail of his soul. And while so august a presence as that of God himself, and of his Son, fills us with sacred awe, let it at the same time animate us to the more diligent and chearful discharge of this duty, since we are encouraged to expect all necessary assistance, and assured that our labour shall be crowned with a rich and everlasting reward. Which leads me to the next direction I would lay down for making this enquiry, which is,

2. To implore the divine direction and assistance.

From the view that has been taken of the subject, we must be convinced that to form an acquaintance with ourselves is no easy task. It is an employment to which we are naturally averse. The mind having been so long accustomed to converse with outward objects, finds it

it difficult to turn inwards and converse with itself. It requires great resolution to enter so thoroughly and to examine so impartially into our character, as is necessary to form a true judgment. If then we are duly sensible of the weakness and ignorance of our minds, and our liahleness to be misled in our enquiries, it will be natural for us to look up to the Father of lights, whom we believe present with us, for that wisdom which we find not in ourselves. That such assistance will not be refused, if we ask it in sincerity, we have the strongest assurance from the promise of our Saviour himself. Luke xi. 9, 10. *I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find : knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth ; and he that seeketh findeth ; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.* And to give the greater encouragement to our prayers he adds, ver. 13. *If ye being evil, and consequently your affection imperfect, do yet know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask it.* The apostle James's advice is of the same kind, *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth liberally to all and upbraideth none ; and it shall be given him,* Jam. i. 5. Let all our enquiries then into our character, be introduced with an humble fervent address to the Father of spirits, that he would vouchsafe to enlighten our dark minds, and lead us into an acquaintance with ourselves. Let us entreat him to purge our souls from the mists of error, passion, and prejudice,

judice, that we may not be led astray by partiality and self-love, but may pass a right judgment upon our character and state. *God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* He is yet more perfectly acquainted with what passeth within us, than we ourselves, and cannot be deceived, as we may be, by false appearances. What reason then is there that we should offer up the petition of the Psalmist; *Search me, O Lord, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

Let me farther add as a necessary caution in this enquiry,

3. Be upon your guard against the deceitfulness of your own hearts, while you are conversing with them.

As no fraud is more fatal, so none is more common, than that by which men impose upon themselves. They are always willing to hope the best. However severe they may be upon others, they easily overlook or excuse their own failings, and see every part of their conduct in the most favourable light. Hence they will be apt too hastily to conclude, that all is well with them, and that they are in a state of favour and acceptance with God; whilst in reality they are strangers to the life and power of religion, and are yet in their sins. Agreeably to the observation of Solomon, *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man: but the end thereof are the ways of death,* Prov. xiv. 12. To prevent so fatal a deception, we must be strict and particular in

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our enquiries. *He that trusteth his own heart is a fool,* Prov. xxviii. 26. The human heart is like a labyrinth, which has endless mazes and windings, in which the unskilful and careless are in danger of being lost and bewildered. When a person sets himself to examine into his own conduct, passion and self-love immediately start up, and often mislead him in the search. By their enchantments they disguise his actions, paint them in false colours, and thus pervert his judgment. Under the influence of this wrong bias, he is tempted to *call evil good, and good evil*: and those very things which he would highly condemn in another, he either passes over unnoticed, or excuses in himself. Again, we are too ready to judge of our true character from the temper of the mind, or the state of the spirits, when we make the enquiry. If we are chearful and lively, if our views of things are bright and striking, we draw a favourable conclusion: but if the scene is changed, if our spirits are on any account dejected, and our minds beclouded with melancholy, we are then disposed to fear the worst, and to *write bitter things against ourselves*: whereas in reality our general state and character is not at all affected by these changes in our animal constitution, which as they are not in our own power, will never be charged to our account. And to add no more, (for it would be endless to enumerate all the ways in which men deceive themselves) many look abroad into the world to learn their character, instead of consulting their own

hearts. If they live in good reputation with their neighbours, and especially if they have reason to believe that they stand high in the esteem of wise and good men, they are satisfied, and too easily conclude that all must be right within; without considering, that the world is a stranger to what passes within their own bosoms, and that the secret testimony of a man's own conscience, that faithful monitor, is of infinitely greater importance than the opinion of all the world beside.

Since then we are so liable to be deceived, we can hardly be too strict and scrupulous in our researches. We must not hearken to the dictates of self-love, or to the flatteries of the world; but must sit in judgment upon ourselves, and suffer conscience to bring in an impartial verdict. Alas! what will it avail to speak peace to ourselves, if the great searcher of hearts do not confirm the sentence? Such false hopes will certainly end in the most bitter disappointment and overwhelming despair.

Yet, on the contrary, it is possible we may pass too severe a censure upon ourselves: and there is no doubt, but many serious upright Christians have distressed their minds with needless fears, and have denied themselves that hope and comfort to which they were justly entitled. In some, this arises from a natural *weakness* and *timidity* of temper, which always inclines them to fear the worst; in others, from a *gloomy melancholy* disposition, which represents every thing in the most unfavourable light: whilst in many cases

cases it proceeds from some mistaken notions of the true nature of religion, and the qualifications necessary to our acceptance with God. This, however, is an error much less to be dreaded than the former, and into which the generality of persons are less likely to fall. It is much safer in an affair of so great consequence to be too fearful, than too presumptuous. Let us pray to him who made the heart, and *by whom all our actions are weighed*, that he would secure us from every mistake by which either our safety or our comfort might be endangered, and enable us to *judge righteous judgment*.

4. Fear not to know the worst of your case. Many persons act in their religious concerns like those tradesmen, who, because they are sensible their affairs are in a bad state, neglect to examine their accounts. They cannot bear to look the danger in the face, and are willing to put the thoughts of it as far from them as possible. Thus they go on from day to day, till ruin seizes on themselves and their families. Whereas, if they had carefully enquired into their circumstances, when they first suspected them upon the decline, and taken those measures which prudence would have suggested, they might have retrieved their affairs and saved their credit. And thus in the present case, men consult their own consciences, but are afraid to receive their answer; like Pilate, when he asked *what was truth*, but would not wait for a reply. But remember, though you now stifle the voice of conscience, the time is coming, when you will be able to evade it no

longer; ere long it will speak as with the voice of thunder, and will fill you with inexpressible anguish and horror. Be entreated then to hearken to its most faithful and severe reproofs, while you may escape that ruin which hangs over your head. Now it speaks to you as a friend, and its admonitions, however unpleasing, may be attended with the happiest effects; but the hour is hastening, when its remonstrances will be the keen reproaches of an enemy, that will only serve to aggravate our misery, and render our state more deplorable. — Be wise in time. What though it give you pain to search into your hearts, and to examine those evils to the bottom, which are lodged there? Is it not like the pain that is felt from the searching of a wound by the hand of a skilful and faithful surgeon, which in some cases may be necessary even to save the patient?

5. Pursue the enquiry, till you have brought it to some conclusion, and faithfully observe and comply with the admonitions which conscience may give you.

Be not satisfied with a general superficial review of your conduct, which can make but a very transient impression upon the mind, and produce but little effect. But enter closely and deeply into your own hearts, and endeavour as far as possible to learn your true character; at least so far as to know what your duty is, and what measures you are to pursue. For whatever be the result of your enquiry, action is necessary. If you find reason to apprehend, that you are as yet destitute of a true principle

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of religion, if you have hitherto been unconcerned about your eternal interest, if you have allowed yourself in the practice of any known sin, or the neglect of any acknowledged duty; dread to think of continuing in so dangerous a state: be perswaded to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold on eternal life. Comply with the gracious terms of the gospel, and by faith and repentance turn unto God, and make your peace with him through the mediation of his Son. If on the other hand, you have good ground to form a favourable conclusion, be thankful to God, who by the various methods of his providence and grace, has brought you into this happy state. But think not your work is done. Still be pressing forwards and making greater advances in the Christian life. Consider how you may most acceptably express your gratitude to God and to your Saviour, in what instances you can exert yourself for their service, and in what respects you may be more useful in the station which providence hath assigned you. Reflect wherein you have failed; (for the best have failings) and apply yourself with redoubled ardor to correct your past errors, and to supply what is wanting in your character. But if, after strict enquiry, you remain still in doubt to which class you belong, you cannot surely rest satisfied in such a state of uncertainty. Is it then a matter of indifference with you, whether you are the servant of God or of Satan, an heir of heaven or hell? Or would you put off the determination to some future time? For

what end ! Will it be easier, think ye, to restrain the irregular workings of appetite and passion, and to submit to the rules of reason and religion after a long course of sinful indulgence ? On the contrary, will not vicious habits gather strength by delay ? Will not your state become every day more hazardous ? Will God be more ready to hear and assist you, when you have put off your application to him, till you have lost your relish for sensual pleasures, and have nothing but the dregs of life to offer him ! Rather may he not be justly provoked by your dissingenuity and ingratitude to withhold those gracious influences which you had so long slighted, and to give you up to the sad consequences of a hardened heart and a reprobate mind ?

But if you are really desirous to arrive at fuller satisfaction in this important affair, be more watchful and diligent ; labour after greater measures of knowledge and holiness, and carefully improve for this purpose all the means of grace, with which you are favoured. Especially be frequent and earnest in your applications for divine assistance. Maintain a constant and humble intercourse with your heavenly Father through the blessed Redeemer, that you may derive from him continual supplies of wisdom and grace. By pursuing this course, the Christian may by degrees attain to a well-grounded hope of his interest in the divine favour and the safety of his state. But till he has made some considerable progress in religion, he can have but very little evidence
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even of his sincerity; and will probably continue in the same uncertain doubtful state to the end of his days. I shall only add,

6. Frequently renew the exercise of Self-examination according to the directions laid down.

We are not to expect that the performance of this duty in a single instance or two, will be attended with those happy effects that have been mentioned. It must be often repeated, and in some measure be made habitual: that is, we must endeavour to form a habit of reflection, which may extend its influence through our whole conduct, that we may not be surprised into sin, but may be steadily governed by the principles of reason and religion. And for this purpose, it will be necessary to call ourselves frequently to an account, and to take every opportunity of examining into the true state of our religious character. So difficult a work as that of knowing ourselves cannot be soon dispatched. We shall not be able, till after repeated trials, to discover the latent springs of action, to detect those frauds by which we often impose upon ourselves, and to view our actions in their true light. Instead of being the work of an hour, as some seem to think, it is really the business of life: and after all the pains that can be taken, and all the time that can be spent in this enquiry, our self-acquaintance will at last be very imperfect. But this ought not to discourage us from making the attempt; since, if we are sincere in exerting our own endeavours, we may hope, with the divine assistance, to acquire such a

degree of self-knowledge, as will be sufficient to direct our conduct, and lay a foundation for settled peace and satisfaction of mind. But certainly the more difficult the undertaking, the more necessary is it that we should be frequently engaged in it. Every one indeed must judge for himself, as to the particular times when this enquiry shall be made. It is certain in general, that the more leisure any can command, the greater obligation are they under, to the frequent discharge of this duty. There are few or none, however, who may not find time every evening to review the actions of the day; and there is something in this practice so agreeable to the common sense and reason of mankind, that we find it recommended even by some heathen writers. * But besides this

* Such was the advice given by *Pythagoras* to his scholars in those celebrated lines in his *Golden Verses*.

Μηδ' ὑπνῶν μαλακοῖσιν ἐπ' ὀμμοῖσι προσδεῖσθαι
 Πρὶν τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔργων τρεῖς ἑκάστον ἐπελθεῖν.
 Πῇ παρεβῆν τι δ' ἐρεξά τι μοι δεῖν ἐκ ἐτελεύσῃ.
 Τάυτα σε τῆς θεῆς ἀπέλυσ εἰς ἵχνα θνήσκει.

Thus englished by *Dr. Watts*, in his *Improvement of the Mind*.

Nor let soft slumbers close your eyes,
 Before you've recollected thrice
 The train of actions through the day,
 Where have my feet chose out their way?
 What have I learnt where-e'er I've been,
 From all I've heard, from all I've seen?
 What know I more that's worth the knowing?
 What have I done, that's worth the doing?
 What have I sought that I should shun?
 What duty have I left undone,
 Or into what new follies run?
 These self-enquiries are the road,
 To lead to virtue and to God.

daily Examination of ourselves, it will be advisable at certain seasons, to take a more solemn and deliberate survey of our habitual temper and conduct, which will enable us to judge with more truth and certainty, not only concerning our state and character in general, but even some particular actions, which, when seen in this more distant view, will often appear to us very different from what they did in our first reflections upon them. And it may be of use to commit to writing the remarks we make on such occasions, by reviewing which at different times we may the more easily know what progress we are making in religion. But all such rules, which refer to the particular manner of conducting this enquiry, must be left to every one's discretion. That which is useful to one, may not be so to another: and he who is sincerely desirous to attain the end, will not be greatly mistaken as to the means.

IMPROVEMENT.

I. We see what is the great end we should propose to ourselves by this self-enquiry; namely, our establishment in religion.

When we set ourselves to examine our own hearts, it should be (as we have already observed) with a sincere intention to rectify those disorders we perceive in them, and to make farther improvements in a virtuous and religious temper. And though we should not be able, after the most accurate enquiry, absolutely to determine our character, we are not there-

fore to conclude, that our labour is lost, or that the Examination is fruitless: if it has helped us to discover any blemishes which before lay concealed, if it has rendered us more watchful and circumspect, if it has stirred us up to greater diligence and activity in our Christian course, it has answered the best purposes. Even this remaining uncertainty as to our state, however painful, may be of great use to quicken us in our duty, and to preserve us from that confidence in our security, which might lay us open to the assaults of temptation. Nevertheless it is certainly our duty, as well as our interest, to seek after more entire satisfaction. And the greater progress we have made in religion, the more likely we are to attain it. Indeed, (as we have hinted above) it is hardly to be expected that those very low and imperfect degrees of goodness, which the generality of Christians take up with, can lay a sufficient foundation for any settled hope or confidence: those many spots and blemishes which are to be found in their character, and their frequent failings and miscarriages must unavoidably create continual doubts and suspicions. If therefore we wish to arrive at a more fixed persuasion of our interest in the divine favour, and the blessings of the gospel, (and who that knows their value, would not earnestly wish it!) we must aim at much more advanced degrees of piety and virtue; we must be steadfast and immovable in the practice of our duty, guarding with the utmost solicitude against temptation, and abounding in every good word and work. In

a word, *forgetting what is behind*, overlooking all past attainments, let us *press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus*. Phil. iii. 14.

2. We learn from hence, the great importance of Self-examination to the Christian life; and how little those consult their religious interest who allow themselves in the habitual neglect of it.

It is the very foundation of all religion; and one might venture to pronounce that man destitute of any true sense of it, who never looked into his own heart, or made any serious reflections on his own character. It is this self-enquiry that must lead us into an acquaintance with our own wants, our weaknesses and defects, our sins and follies, and the temptations to which we are particularly exposed: If we are insensible of these, we can never apply in earnest for pardon or assistance, nor shall we be disposed to use the necessary means for securing our religious interests.

While we continue strangers to ourselves, (and strangers we must be, if Self-examination be wholly neglected) all the instructions we receive, and all the advantages we enjoy for our spiritual improvement will be utterly vain and ineffectual. Till a person enters deeply into his own breast, and applies divine truths to his own case, the motives of religion can make no impression upon him. He may indeed have acquired a speculative knowledge of these subjects, and may perhaps be able to discourse upon them with freedom and propriety; but he
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will consider them only as the employment of his understanding, and will never enter into their spirit, or act under their influence. How unaccountable is it then, that those who profess to be concerned about their religious welfare, should live in the neglect of so plain, and so essential a duty ! And how much is it to be lamented, that even serious Christians are not more diligent and conscientious in the practice of it. Little do they consider how much true peace and self-enjoyment they lose. No wonder if they complain of the low state of religion in their souls, and are full of doubts and fears, while they are so remiss in using that which would prove the most effectual means of establishing their minds, and confirming their hopes. —Let us be deeply humbled before God for our own negligence and indifference, and let it be our sincere resolution to apply ourselves with greater seriousness and constancy to this acknowledged, but neglected duty. It is true, it will require some degree of resolution to overcome that indispotion and reluctance which the mind perceives to this employment : but surely the advantage attending it will be a sufficient recompence, and even that difficulty we now complain of, will vanish by degrees ; and in proportion as our religious character improves, it will give us pleasure to examine ourselves. Every new conquest over our lusts will yield us the most solid satisfaction, and the seeds of virtue sown in the mind and springing up in the fruits of holiness, will afford us the most delightful prospect.

3. If serious reflection and Self-examination be of so much importance, what reason have we to admire the wisdom and goodness of God in appointing stated seasons for these exercises. The mind even of the most sober and thoughtful is apt to be dissipated by the cares or pleasures of life, and would soon contract a disrelish and unsuitness for an employment that is attended with so much difficulty and self-denial. God has therefore in great condescension to our weakness, directed a certain proportion of our time to be more immediately devoted to the cultivation of religion and virtue in our souls. On such seasons we are called to separate ourselves from the business and amusements of life, that with greater advantage we may seek and intermeddle with true wisdom, that we may command more leisure to converse with God and our own hearts. To assist our reflections, he has instituted the divine ordinances of his sanctuary, in which the most interesting truths are set before us, to awaken our attention and impress our minds.—This indeed is the proper light in which all the instructions and admonitions we receive from the word of God should be considered. They are intended, not to supersede, but only to direct and improve our more private meditations. Unless therefore we apply the sacred truths we hear to ourselves, unless we compare our own temper and character with the rules which the gospel lays down, unless we recollect them afterwards in our retirements, and endeavour by serious consideration so to fix them upon the

the mind, that they may have their proper effect on our future conduct ; unless we make this use of them, the very end and design for which they are delivered to us is lost.— And the same remark may be applied to the reading of the Scriptures, or other books of a practical and devotional kind. Their proper use is to supply us with subjects for our own reflection, and not to stand in its stead. For indeed this exercise is so absolutely necessary to purify, enlighten, and establish the mind, that no other means of religion, however valuable in themselves, can possibly supply the want of it.—Let it be a rule with us then to employ some part of our sacred time, and particularly the evening of the Lord's-day, in the careful performance of this duty: and I persuade myself, we shall soon perceive the advantage of it in our visible improvement in religion, and in a growing acquaintance with our own hearts.

4. Let us be thankful for the clear discoveries of our duty with which we are favoured.

God has written his laws in our hearts, and his statutes in our inward parts: for reason is the *candle of the Lord*, (Prov. xx. 27.) and the *inspiration of the Almighty hath given us understanding*, Job xxxii. 8. Every man hath a faithful monitor within his own breast, which, while it remains unperverted, points out his duty, and powerfully urges him to the practice of it. And though in some intricate cases it may be difficult to determine where our duty lies ; yet in general the path is plain and easy

easy to be found.—But thanks be to God, we are not left merely to the light of nature for our direction, but are favoured with a divine revelation, in which we are *taught what is good, and what the Lord our God requires of us.* The Son of God has condescended to become our instructor. He has taught both by precept and example, and enforced his commands by the most powerful sanctions. The best and only return we can make for these favours, is faithfully to consult the dictates of conscience and to study the sacred oracles; that we may more fully comprehend the perfection and extent of the divine law, and may be enabled with greater advantage to search and try ourselves.

5. Let us all be persuaded to comply with the exhortation in the text.—So may we *ponder the path of our feet, that all our ways may be established!*

For this purpose, give me leave to conclude with urging this precept on each of our consciences; that, by the blessing of God, those who have been hitherto careless and thoughtless may be awakened to serious reflection, and before it is too late, may attend to those things that concern their everlasting peace.

Consider then, is not reason the distinguishing excellence of our natures? and can we imagine we are not accountable to our Maker for the improvement of it? Will any flatter themselves that he is above regarding the actions of men, and that the most High takes no account of our behaviour? But can it be thought unworthy

worthy of him to superintend and govern those creatures whom he has thought fit to bring into being, and to endue with powers and faculties by which they are made capable of moral government? Now what can we imagine was the design of reason, if not to direct our conduct according to the laws which the supreme ruler and governor of the world has laid down, and which are evidently intended to advance our highest happiness? But is it possible this design should be answered, if we scarce ever employ one serious thought upon the subject? Are we likely to fulfil the end of our creation, and keep the path of wisdom, if we walk at random, just as inclination and passion lead the way? Some perhaps may affect to make light of such remonstrances, and justify themselves by the example of others about them. But let such consider, how they will answer it at the great tribunal of their judge, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed. Nay, let them consider, how they can now answer it at the tribunal of their own conscience. Enter into your own breasts, think seriously on your conduct, and then say whether it approves itself to your own mind. Does not your heart smite you for your levity and folly? And beware lest you think lightly of its reproofs; for the sentence it pronounces will be confirmed by that almighty being, on whose will your eternal state depends.

But you'll say perhaps, "You cannot consider. You have not leisure or abilities for so difficult a work." But do you not exercise reflection and

and consideration in the affairs of the world? And why not then in the concerns of religion? Men in business discover great prudence and wisdom in the management of their trade; they are diligent and exact in keeping their accounts, and are not satisfied unless they can form a pretty certain judgment of the state of their affairs: Now what should prevent your employing the same diligence and circumspection in your spiritual interests?

Some again have neglected this important work so long, till they are afraid to look into their own hearts. They know conscience will reproach them, and therefore they would willingly fly from its accusations.—But can you then, unhappy men, flee from yourselves? Do you not carry the fatal sting in your own bosoms? Or supposing you could still the voice of conscience; suppose you could conceal yourselves from its remonstrances, think ye that you can possibly escape the judgment of God? If your own hearts condemn you, be assured that God, who is greater than your hearts, will not acquit you. Be prevailed upon then to sit in judgment on your own actions, and let conscience pass its verdict. *Judge your selves, that ye be not condemned with the world.*

Finally, let those who have already begun this work be persuaded to abound in it more and more. Let it be their concern to encrease in the knowledge of themselves, and to make those attainments in holiness, which may render it a pleasing and delightful employment to converse with their own hearts.

S E R M O N X.

The proper Regulations of Religious Zeal.

By the Rev. Mr. SMYTH.

ROM. x. 2.

For I bear them record, that they have a Zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

ZEAL, when it is in a good cause, and of a right kind, is undoubtedly a very laudable and necessary disposition of mind: we are not, however, to imagine, that every thing which goes by that name, is either commendable, or so much as lawful. The use of the word in the New Testament, is it self sufficient to convince us of this; for it is there much oftener used in a bad, than a good sense; and more frequently signifies, that which is faulty and sinful, than any thing praise-worthy and acceptable in the sight of God. This alone were enough to shew us, of what importance

it is to enquire into the nature of Zeal; the characters by which we may, with certainty, distinguish that which is regular from that which is faulty; the proper occasions on which it is to be exercised; and the bounds which must be set to it, to prevent it from degenerating into fury and madness. But the usefulness of such inquiries would (it may be) more sensibly appear, if we were to look into history, particularly ecclesiastical history, and take a view of the mischiefs that have sprung from rash, misguided Zeal: it would be no difficult thing to collect thence such an account of them, as would make a good-natured man tremble; for I think it may be truly said, that all the quarrels and contentions which have arisen among Christians; all the cruelty and injustice they have by turns exercised towards one another, have been principally, if not wholly owing to this, as the cause of them. When I say this, I would not be understood, as designing to discountenance or blame all kind of Zeal for God and religion; far from it: I am fully convinced, that nothing is meaner, or more unbecoming, than lukewarmness and indifference in such cases. But then, since it is so easy, and so common a thing for men to run into extravagance and madness, and then to justify and applaud themselves for their Zeal; it is highly necessary we should be upon our guard, and see to it, that as on the one hand, we be not cold and unconcerned in the cause of truth and virtue (which are the cause of God;) so on the other hand, that we take heed to regulate our Zeal, to keep it with-

in bounds, and not make use of it as a cloak to cover ourselves in the gratification of passions, and in the pursuit of ends which we dare not avow.

'Tis with these views that I propose,

I. In a few words to state the notion of Zeal in general. And then,

II. To set before you such marks and characters of true and regular Zeal, by which you may certainly distinguish it from that which is false and mischievous.

By the little that has been said; it appears, that simply and absolutely considered, Zeal is neither a virtue nor a vice, but may be either the one or the other, according to the springs and motives, and tendencies of it. The general notions of it may be thus stated; "That it is the warmth or earnestness of the mind, for or against any cause or thing; prompting us to, and discovering itself by a vigorous manner of acting."

Let us see then, if we cannot fix upon some such marks and characters of true regular Zeal, as will help us certainly to distinguish it, from that which is false and mischievous.

I take leave to propose the following as such.

First, regular Zeal must be founded upon knowledge of, and a deliberate judgment formed about, the matter or thing which engages our Zeal. 'Tis for wanting this, that the apostle blames the Zeal of the Jews. *I bear them record, that they have a Zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.* The necessity of such knowledge is, one would think, obvi-

ous to every bodles notice; for without it, our Zeal may, for ought we know, be engaged in a bad cause; which surely is a sufficient proof that it is irregular.

The man, who designing to make great haste in his way, either shuts his eyes, or takes no notice whither he goes; by how much the more in haste he is, so much the more likely is he to stumble, or fall, or go out of his way. Just so, he who is pushed on by warm Zeal, in defence of, or in opposition to any point, which he either cannot, or won't be at the pains to understand, and form a judgment about; will very probably find himself engaged on the wrong side.

Let us then take care, that before we suffer our Zeal to grow warm, for or against any cause; we get as thorough a knowledge of it as we can. How common soever it may be, yet nothing surely can be more preposterous, than to begin with being very zealous, before we understand for what, or why. Consider a little, how ridiculous a figure would that man make, who passing by a crowd of people quarrelling with one another, and divided into parties; should presently side with one of them, and shew a great deal of warmth in defence of it, without knowing (or indeed at all enquiring) which is in the right, and which in the wrong. In this case, though there should be but two parties, and one of them in the right; (which yet is far from always happening) it is an equal chance, whether he hits on that or the other: if there be more than two parties, the greater

the number of them is, the greater is the odds against him, whether he espouses the right or no; for there can be but one in the right. But if it should happen (as it often does) that all sides are mistaken, he is sure to be so too, and for ought he can tell, may fall in with those who are most in the wrong. So necessary it is to open our eyes, and let in the light, before we suffer ourselves to be heated by the fire of other folks Zeal: so great a hazard do we run, when we join with any party, without examining their opinions, searching into the springs and motives of their Zeal, and enquiring into the justness of the methods which it prompts them to use. And yet I dare appeal to any man, who is acquainted with the history of former times, or who observes what passes in our own; whether the far greater number of those in every age, who have shewn the warmest Zeal, have not, at the same time, discovered the greatest ignorance. Nay, I dare appeal further, whether it does not generally hold good, that where there is most ignorance, there is most of this kind of Zeal; and where there is most knowledge, there is most moderation, and candor, and forbearance towards those of a different party or opinion.

Secondly, Regular Zeal must be free from prejudice, corrupt bias, and party-views; and must proceed from a sincere regard to truth and virtue. It is not my being well informed of, and thoroughly acquainted with the cause in which I engage, that will of itself justify my Zeal in it. If knowing a thing to be false
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and erroneous, I contend earnestly for it; or if knowing it to be unlawful, I practise it myself, and strenuously insist upon it that others should do so too; all the Zeal I express upon such occasions is most certainly faulty. Nay, though it be a certain truth, or an important duty which I am concerned for, and I know it to be such; yet if my concern and Zeal for it is occasioned, not by a sincere regard to it as such, nor to the authority of God requiring me to be in earnest in such cases, but to prejudice, or corrupt bias, or party-views, my Zeal is still not of the right kind.

We ought therefore to be very careful and strict, in the observation of ourselves, the springs from whence our Zeal flows, and the motives by which it is set to work. When the heart glows with an ardent love to God, and a sincere concern for the cause of truth and virtue, there will be very little danger of running into extremes: the man who is animated by such principles, and engaged by such motives, will of course abhor any thing that is mean, and base, and low; any thing that is contrary to humanity, and that benevolence which all men owe to one another: or inconsistent with the genuine spirit and temper of Christianity. When it is thus with him, though he can never be lukewarm in such a cause; yet he will always take care not to let his Zeal out-run his knowledge, nor to pretend that a concern for the honour of God, and the advancement of truth and goodness, are the sources of it, whilst

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at the same time it is all owing to his corruptions, and passions, and prejudices.

And here indeed, the great danger lies, lest we impose upon other people (and it may be upon ourselves too) with the appearance and pretence of such a concern for the honour of God, and such a disinterested regard to truth and virtue; whilst it is really ambition and pride, worldly interest and covetousness, envy, and a spirit of opposition, or some other such corrupt passion, that lies at the bottom, and both kindles, and enflames our Zeal. How apt men are to do so, I appeal to the observation of any considerate person. 'Tis true, nobody will own these, or the like, to be the true reasons of their warmth and Zeal: even those who know in their own consciences, that they have no real concern for the honour of God, or the advancement of religion, but that they are acted merely by worldly politicks and views; won't however publicly acknowledge it, for fear of defeating their own designs, and passing for knaves and hypocrites. Nay, I will add, that no man who is sincere, will allow himself to be influenced by such motives; and it must be through inadvertence, and for want of being sufficiently acquainted with himself, if at any time he is so: all this, I say, I am very ready to allow; and yet am very sure, that the far greatest part of that Zeal which has been warmest, and done most mischief in the several ages of the church; has taken its rise from causes, and been actuated by motives, widely different from those which have been pretended. Hypocrites, and worldly

worldly minded men, have put on a disguise, and so imposed upon the unwary and credulous; nay, and sometimes even good men (though the supposition of their being such, implies that they did not perceive it) have been influenced by base and unworthy views, whilst they imagined that it was Zeal for God and religion all the while, and so have deceived not only other people, but themselves too.

To make good what I have now advanced, it may be of use to consider a little, how commonly, and how easily, mankind are thus led aside by their prejudices. Every body observes, that of those who have any Zeal for religion, the generality are zealous for that which they were first taught, and in which they have been all along brought up. Thus the heathen world was very zealous for a plurality of gods, and for that superstitious worship which they were taught to pay to them. So zealous, that Socrates, one of the wisest and best among them, was accused and put to death as an atheist, for teaching that there is but one God, and that those whom his countrymen worshipped as gods, were not such. Thus the Mahometans are very zealous for the honour of their prophet, and would scarce think it a fault, I suppose, to murder any man, that should cast a reflection, either on his person or laws. The blind Zeal of the Jews, and their contempt of all the rest of mankind, plainly enough appear, from the account given of them in the New Testament. So again, as to the Papists, their stubborn bigotry, and rash Zeal, have been not

only seen, but sensibly felt too. I could heartily wish, that Protestants had never, any of them, been chargeable in the like kind. It would be tedious to mention all the several sects and parties into which they are shamefully divided; though if I were to do so, it would be plain, with respect to each of them, that many of those who give in to them, and are most zealous for them, have no other kind of reasons for doing so, than, that such were the opinions and practices they were brought up in, and the espousing these serves their interest, and gratifies their passions.

When a thoughtful man sets him down, and takes such a view of the world, when he sees every party, not only pretending to be fully persuaded that themselves are in the right, and all the rest in the wrong; but very zealously defending their own opinions and practices, and opposing those of other people; it's natural, in such a case, to enquire, Whence this should come to pass? To what it can be owing, that reasonable creatures, and some of them blest with a divine revelation too, should yet think and act so very differently; give into such palpable absurdities, and contradict one another in points, where even the common sense of an impartial man would be sufficient to determine between them; and be very angry with one another, for using that liberty, which every one thinks he himself has a right to. It can (I think) be accounted for no other way, than by supposing (what experience shews to be true in fact) that the bulk of mankind take up their religion

ligion as they find it, without making any inquiry into the grounds and reasons of it: generally speaking, it is not evidence of its truth, or conviction of its usefulness, that inclines them to choose any religion at all; or to prefer one before another; but example which they follow, prejudices which they have imbibed, corrupt bias by which they are swayed, or party designs which are to be carried on. Thus most men come by what they call their religion, and hence flows that Zeal which does so much mischief in the world; whereas, diligent inquiry after, and a sincere love of truth and virtue, though it would not abate, yet it would regulate our Zeal.

Thirdly, Regular Zeal must always be proportioned to the moment of the things about which it is engaged. That is to say, the more important the thing is, the warmer may our Zeal be, either for or against it; and the less important it is, the less need is there of being much concerned about it. I suppose it will be granted, that things are, in their own nature, as well as in human estimation, of different importance; does it not hence follow, that things thus different claim from us a different degree of regard? That that Zeal is very irregular which is equally warm upon every occasion? And that in order to the Regulation of it, it must be proportioned to the weight of the matter about which it is engaged? All which, if it be so, will serve yet farther to convince us, of the irregularity of the far greatest part of that Zeal, which has done most mischief in the world.

world. It would be endless to tell you, what trifling matters have given occasion to the most furious contests in the Christian church; ecclesiastical history is, in a manner, one continued series of instances of this kind. Give me leave to mention one or two of them.

In the first age of Christianity, the converts to it were partly Jews, partly Gentiles: the former, were very zealous for the observation of several of the ceremonies of Moses's law; the latter thought, (and thought truly) that now the necessity and use of them was superceded. Any attentive reader of the New Testament may see, how fiercely each side contended; the one for, the other against, these trifles. The apostles, particularly St. Paul, took every proper occasion to let both sides know, that the matters in dispute were so inconsiderable, that they did ill to condemn one another; that both sides might (at least till they were better informed) safely enjoy their own opinions; that they ought to *receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations*: all which notwithstanding, they were shamefully alienated in affection; and in their great Zeal thought that a man deserved the name of a Christian, according as he either did, or did not, eat of this or the other meat, or observe this or the other day.

The next quarrel in the church which I shall take notice of, was about the time of keeping Easter: some were for keeping it at the very time the Jews celebrated the passover, on whatever day of the week that happened. Others were for observing it on the Lord's day following.

ing. For some little while they were so wise as to bear with one another in this trifling difference; but it was not long, before it grew to be the matter of such warm debate; and the determination of the point was looked upon as so very necessary, that, if I mistake not, several councils were assembled about it; in which it was resolved, that Easter should be the Sunday after the Jewish passover. And because most of the eastern churches retained their former opinion and practice; the western churches were so very angry, that Victor, then bishop of Rome, pronounced sentence of excommunication against all such as should refuse to come into his measures. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! When mens minds are carnal and selfish, proud and worldly, nothing is so inconsiderable in itself, but it may become a bone of contention. I could employ this, and many more hours, in giving you an account of their quarrels, about the conditions upon which the lapsed should be restored to the churches peace; the rebaptizing such as had been baptized by those whom they pleased to call hereticks; and a hundred more instances, which I choose to pass by, that I may have time to suggest the following remarks.

I. Since it is of vastly greater importance to every man, that he himself should judge right in matters of doctrine, and behave well in matters of practice, than that others should do so; it hence follows, that our Zeal ought principally to be employed this way. I am afraid this is too seldom considered; the generality of mankind

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kind seem to think, that their Zeal is to be employed wholly about other people, and not at all about themselves. Nothing is more common, than to see the very same men, who express a great deal of concern, that others should think and act just as they do in matters of religion, yet shamefully careless in their own searches after truth, and in regulating their own conduct. Surely the first efforts of Zeal should be, for the correction of our own mistakes and faults: and though a good man will not be wholly indifferent about those of other people; yet will he be more concerned, to remove the beam out of his own eye, than the mote out of his brother's.

2. Plain duties are of more importance than matters of speculation; and therefore regular Zeal will be more solicitous about the former, than about the latter. *That men should fear God and keep his commandments; that they should do to others as they would have others do to them; that they should live soberly, righteously, and godly;* is of vastly more importance, than that they should all agree exactly in disputable points. And yet, as if mankind were resolved to act preposterously, they have generally shewn ten fold more Zeal about speculative opinions, (such wherein the best men may differ) than about the plainest and most important duties. Look abroad into the world, and observe, how contentedly some of the warmest zealots can let a drunkard, a swearer, a whoremonger, or an oppressor, live peaceably by them, without attempting or desiring to deprive them of their rights

rights upon that account; but if another man happens to think somewhat differently from them in some abstruse points of religion, presently their Zeal takes fire, little differences are magnified, innocent, and it may be, wise and good men are vilified, and misrepresented as dangerous and infectious persons. Is not wickedness in a man's life as infectious, and a thousand times more dangerous, than a mistake in opinion? Will not God much more easily pardon an error in judgment, or the weakness of a man's understanding, than the naughtiness of his heart, and the badness of his life? I am as sure he will, as I am, that he is a wise and just being.

Let him, therefore, that would shew a true Zeal for the honour of God, and the cause of religion, set himself in the gap against vice and immorality; let him be more severe against an open profligate, than against an honest man of a mistaken opinion: and I dare so far answer for the success of this method, that when once men's hearts are mended, and their lives reformed; they will either quit their mistaken opinions, or their mistaken opinions will do them no harm.

3. Peace and love among Christians, are of unspeakably more importance, than any particular form of church government, or any rites and ceremonies in religion, not enjoined by the authority of Christ: and therefore if our Zeal be regular, we shall be much less concerned about imposing and using these, than for the securing and cultivating peace and love among
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all good men. And yet (to our shame be it spoken) these are the things which have engaged a great part of the warmest of that Zeal which has appeared in this kingdom since the reformation. Whether the church should be ruled by diocesan bishops, or by bishops of no larger a jurisdiction than they can personally inspect? Whether bishop and presbyter are names for different orders; or different names for the same order of church governors? Whether particular churches are independent of each other, as to the exercise of what is called authority; or, Whether every particular society of Christians be subordinate and subject to the government of synods? Whether kneeling at the sacrament, bowing at the name of Jesus, signing with the cross in baptism, praying by a form or without, be customs and ceremonies decent in themselves, and fit to be imposed; or, Whether Christianity had not better be left in its native simplicity, without these supplements and decorations? These, and the like, are questions which have been long and warmly disputed on both sides. But, alas! how little, comparatively, has been done on either side, towards reviving Christian love, cultivating peace and friendship, and maintaining *charity, which is the bond of perfectness*?

Impartiality, disinterestedness, and a small measure of understanding, would soon have terminated all such differences, and would have made men either agree in opinion about them, or (which is far better) made them love one another notwithstanding their disagree-

ment. When shall it once be, that Christians shall grow wise enough to lay no more stress on such things, than the nature and importance of them will bear? Though I heartily pray for the time, yet I confess I am not sanguine enough to expect it, as long as profit and preferment are so closely connected with a profession of the belief of one particular set of doctrines, or the practising one particular set of ceremonies: and the reason why I can't expect it is, because the course of the world is such, that interest will generally carry it against judgment; and there are, comparatively, few men, who will not contend zealously for things which they secretly think light of, so long as this is the way to wealth and preferment; rather than by an avowed moderation, make both more scarce. But sure a wise man would prefer peace and love to a thousand such trifles, and would rather be found of his Lord cultivating those, than disputing never so earnestly about forms of government, and rites in worship.

4. Regular Zeal must be attended with Christian charity; and must never break in upon those rights which all claim in common as men and Christians. I know very well, that nothing has been more common, than for intemperate Zeal to do the greatest mischiefs, and commit the most bare-faced violations of justice, humanity, and common decency; under the pretence of charity to men's souls, and a hearty concern for their everlasting welfare. Thus the Protestants, at the revocation of the edict of Nants, were told, that dragooning, plundering, and imprisoning

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imprisoning them, were for their soul's good; that, if they were robbed of their children, it was only to make them members of that church, out of which there is no possibility of being saved. This is joining insolence to cruelty. Such, for ought I know, may be the charity of a Popish bigot, whose tender mercies have been often felt to be the most outrageous cruelties: but sure I am, that as it is far from being of the kind with that, which the Christian religion inspires; so every good natured man will detest such villainous pretences to it. Can any one in his senses be brought to believe, that groundless suspicions, rash censures, unjust calumnies, cruel tortures, or bloody massacres, are the fruits of Christian charity? 'Tis impossible. If St. James knew any thing of the matter, he will inform us, that lower injuries than some of these must proceed from a quite different principle; even from that *wisdom which is earthly, sensual and devilish.*

Whatever therefore be the cause in which our Zeal engages, we must be careful, that it does not extinguish our charity, but that it be animated by it: that we never injure any man in his person, reputation or property, under the pretence of Zeal for God, and the better to inform his judgment, and cure him of his errors. Regular Zeal will never go this way to work; and Christian charity will direct to methods much more innocent and successful: such are, friendly, courteous carriage; reproof given in the spirit of meekness; arguments backed, not with force, but reason and evidence; calm and sober

sober expostulations concerning the bad tendency of their errors, the slight grounds on which they have embraced them, and the reasonableness of impartiality in our searches after truth : methods of this kind seldom fail of doing good ; they have a direct tendency to open men's minds to conviction, and lead them to receive the truth in the love of it : whereas, the other method can do no more than make men hypocrites ; professing to believe that, which in their hearts they detest and abhor.

5. and lastly, Regular Zeal must be under the conduct of Christian prudence. Since in its general notion it imports warmth and earnestness of mind, and that prompting us to a vigorous manner of acting ; if it be not thus conducted, it will in all likelihood become rash and impetuous, and run us into a thousand indecencies and inconveniencies.

That you may the better come at my meaning under this head, be pleased to recollect what was said under a former ; that our Zeal ought to proceed from a sincere regard to God and religion, to truth and virtue : if now these be the only things that can justifiably kindle and engage our Zeal ; and if for want of prudence the warmest Zeal will rather defeat than advance these good ends, it is manifest that Zeal ought always to be guided by prudence. By which I would not be understood to mean worldly prudence, or that which is only concerned to secure our present ease and interests : for these must often be sacrificed in so good a cause : but the prudence I mean, is that which

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will direct to the choice, and in the use of the properest methods, and the fittest seasons for promoting these goods ends.

There are some ways of propagating religion, and of which some men seem fonder than of any other, that have always done religion more harm than service. Every means that may be devised, cannot be thought fit to serve every end that may be proposed.

So again, all seasons are not proper for the exercise of Zeal in defence of religion: a man may be so unskilful, as to pitch upon such a time, or place, or other circumstance, in which to refute error, or reprove sin, as may not only make him lose his pains, but confirm the person in his wrong opinion or practice. If our Zeal be thus rash and incautious it defeats itself, and is certainly irregular. Whereas, if it be guided by prudence, it will (ordinarily at least) avoid these inconveniencies: it will on the one hand, direct us not to be so timorous, as to refuse venturing any thing for God's sake, and in a good cause; and on the other hand, it will restrain from all precipitate measures, and lead us to have a due regard to persons, seasons, places, and other such circumstances; the not attending to which, has been the occasion of blasting many an honest and well meant design.

When Zeal is under such Regulations as these which I have mentioned, I don't know any character in the world more lovely than that of a zealous man. It is in short this; which

which the more narrowly we view it, the better we shall like it.

He is one, who by serious inquiry has arrived at a competent acquaintance with those truths which it is of most importance to know, and of those duties which are most necessary to be practised. And as he sees how perfectly agreeable the former are to the understanding of a reasonable creature, and how fit it is, that those who are endowed with reason, and are designed for social life, should practise the latter; so he has a settled propensity, a warm desire, to propagate both the one and the other among mankind, and to improve himself especially, in both. This his Zeal arises, not from any corrupt bias on his will, or any selfish purposes that are to be answered by it; but from a rational conviction that nothing is so beautiful and amiable as truth and virtue; and from a sincere desire to promote the honour of God, and the happiness of mankind. He is one, who, as he knows, that though all truth is equally true, yet that it is not all of equal importance, nor every real duty of equal necessity; so he proportions his Zeal to the nature and moment of things: being less concerned about matters of comparatively little weight, and more so about greater. He is one, who amidst all his Zeal, remembers that he is a man; subject to passions and mistakes as well as his neighbours: and therefore he never grows haughty and assuming, insolent and domineering, but is full of love and good-will to all mankind, even to those who differ most widely from him: and

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who therefore dares not, under any pretence whatsoever, violate the laws of charity, nor break in upon any rights to which all men have an equal claim. He is one, who, though he spares no pains in informing the ignorant, convincing the erroneous, reproofing the bold sinner, and reforming the debauchee; yet never allows himself to censure rashly, to slander, oppress or injure any man in any kind, and much less upon account of religion, or matters of conscience. Finally, he is one, who, though he is very earnest and diligent in this work, yet goes about it with prudence, and manages it with caution and discretion.

Such is the character of the man whose Zeal God approves, and all wise and good men applaud. Such a man can scarce be supposed ever to do any mischief in the world; he can scarce fail of being remarkably beneficial to it. And as ugly an appearance as Zeal sometimes makes, big with the mischiefs and ruin which it has too often produced; thus lovely a figure would it make, under the mentioned Regulations. Though therefore there is nothing against which I would more earnestly caution, than against a blind, selfish, undistinguishing, uncharitable and rash Zeal; yet I take leave to recommend a well regulated Zeal, as a disposition of mind which we ought to cultivate in ourselves, and value, whenever we see it in others.

S E R M O N XI.

Popery not Christianity.

Preached at Little St. Helen's, Aug. 1. 1750.

By the Rev. Mr. PRIOR.

REV. xviii. 4.

Come out of her, my people.

WHOEVER reads the Scriptures with attention will observe, that the spirit of prophecy speaks expressly there of a grand apostacy from the Christian faith and worship. In these sacred books it is plainly foretold, that under the Gospel dispensation, there would arise a *man of sin, whose coming would be after the working of Satan, with signs and lying wonders*,—the chief seat of whose residence would be in the *great city on seven hills, the mother of abominations*;—who sitting in the temple of God would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God;—who would make war with the saints and overcome them:—and, being drunken

with their blood, (2 Theff. chap. ii. Rev. chap. xiii. and xvii.) would, for an appointed season, riot in great pride and affluence. All these predictions we, who live in these later ages, have seen surprisingly fulfilled in the church of Rome; a church, that assumes the name of Holy Catholic, and condemns all that dissent from her, as scismaticks and reprobates: but which is really in her whole frame an usurpation on Christianity; a dishonour to the religion of nature; and a faction against the common rights of mankind, founded on craft, supported by violence and blood!

Our fathers beheld this *mystery of iniquity* with abhorrence and manly indignation: but the present generation seems not to be so well acquainted with its fatal tendency. The emissaries of the Roman see are ever busy to make proselytes; and we are often alarmed, as if this senseless, destructive scheme was gaining ground among us. On these accounts it will not be improper fairly to represent the gross corruptions of the Roman church;—the idolatry of her worship;—the absurdity and impiety of her distinguishing doctrines;—the tyranny and cruelty of her principles and practices;—hereby to revive in men's minds the decaying horror, and to guard them against the arts of those, *who lie in wait to deceive*.

The words of the text are an exhortation to the people of God to come out of Babylon. That by Babylon can be intended no other place but Rome, is confessed by all, even by popish writers themselves. The only controverted

verted point is, whether we are to understand it of Pagan or modern Rome. Be this as it will; most certain it is, the character here drawn of Babylon is an exact and complete picture of Rome in its present state of Popery. It is further certain, where the simplicity of the Gospel is corrupted by the inventions of men; where the unity of the church is broken by new terms of communion; where things superstitious and dangerous to mens souls are brought into the church; where such things are to be found, as are practised and imposed in the Roman church; we are as much obliged to withdraw ourselves from that church, as if we heard a voice from Heaven, saying, *Come out of her, my people.* It is a debt we owe to God, to liberty, to truth. It is an act of homage and allegiance due to Christ, who is appointed sole Lord and King in his church. We cannot abide in her communion without partaking of her sins, and without being in danger of receiving of her plagues.

To support this general charge I observe,
First, The worship of the Roman church is idolatrous. The Scripture command is, *Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;* Matt. iv. 10. This command is enforced by the strongest reason: *for we know that an idol is nothing,* 1 Cor. viii. 6. *and that to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord or mediator, Jesus Christ, through whom alone we have access to the Father,* 1 Tim. ii. 5. Ephes. ii. 18. These are the express declarations of Christ and his a-

postles. This is the pure, unmixed doctrine of the Gospel. But in direct opposition to all this, the church of Rome hath presumed to set up lords and mediators many. It has put angels and saints into the mediatorial throne together with Christ: yea, it makes them not only associates with Christ, but in many cases it sets them absolutely above him: for to many of their saints, especially to Mary, the mother of our Lord, they address their prayers more frequently, and more devoutly than to him, even in a stile as high and rapturous, as to the ever blessed God himself. This is evident from the constant language of their Missals and Breviaries, their Liturgies, and other books of devotion, set forth at Rome by public authority. In these the virgin is called "the Mother of
 " Mercy, the hope of the world, and the only
 " trust of sinners; the queen regent of Paradise; who not only commands the creatures,
 " but God himself; who is more merciful to
 " sinners than Jesus Christ." These extravagant and profane compliments bring to one's mind those awful words of the apostle; *because they received not the love of the truth, for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lye.* 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11.

Most strict is the prohibition of images to the Jews in their worship. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing, that is in Heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them,* Exod. xx. 4. Not only Moses, but other sacred writers, both among the

the prophets, and the apostles of our Lord, represent this prohibition, as founded, not on mere positive authority, but on reasons, that are moral and perpetual. But this very iniquity, which the Scripture severely condemns, the church of Rome has dared to establish by a law. She sets up images and bows down to them, not as objects of worship, say some of her cautious defenders, but only as emblems and historical memorials. Be it so, still the practice is utterly inexcusable; it is absurd and immoral, equally so with the Israelites worshipping the golden calf.—But this is a false representation. The Romanists are instructed to believe, that there is a divinity residing in those images: they ascribe god-like powers to them, and they pray directly to them, for all the blessings of this life and of the next. So high is their presumption risen, as to form to themselves images of that infinite eternal mind, whom *no man hath seen nor can see*; whom therefore to describe by lines and figures is a manifest opposition to the doctrine of revelation, and shocking to the undepraved sense of nature. They give religious homage to pictures and relicks, to moulded clay, to painted canvas, and carved stones. The highest acts of adoration are paid by them to an inanimate wafer, and to every pectoral cross. Thus that Antichristian church defiles the temple of God with idols, and in many respects is guilty of as stupid and abject an idolatry, as ever was practised by Rome in its antient state of Heathenism.

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The plainness and simplicity of worship, which the Gospel prescribes, is its dignity and glory. By human embellishments, by mixing things of a foreign nature with it, its native beauty is tarnished, and its dignity much debased. Here the governors of the church of Rome have wanted, and been very luxurious. Pure Christianity they have hid under a thick veil of unmeaning ceremonies; and by ridiculous fopperies, and numerous rites, the very dregs of pagan superstition, they have so woefully disfigured its original, fair, lovely complexion, that scarce any traces of it appear. By that degenerate church all religion is turned into pageantry and grimace; and a much greater stress is laid on fastings and going pilgrimages, on bowing to crucifixes, and servile prostrations before the shrines of pretended saints, than on moral goodness.

In the second place, The distinguishing doctrines of the Roman church are impious and absurd. So flagrant is the absurdity and impiety of them, that one would really wonder how there could have risen among men, either impudence to propose, or stupidity to swallow them. But we are not ignorant of the devices, by which Popery was first established, and rose by degrees to its present enormous size of superstition and extravagance.—About the fifth and sixth century after Christ, clouds of darkness came down from the north and overshadowed the nations. Ambitious, designing men found means to avail themselves of the general blind-

blindness, and to make the unreasonable and oppressive scheme go down.

That the bishop of Rome is the unerring vicar of God upon earth, and hath supreme authority over the church, is a fundamental doctrine of Popery*. This arrogant and presumptuous claim is founded upon two strange suppositions;—that St. Peter was the visible head of the whole church; and that the bishop of Rome succeeds him in the fulness of his authority. But the whole is a groundless pretence, for which there is not one word in the New Testament. There we are commanded to *call no man master*; to acknowledge no human authority in matters of religion; but to remember that *one only is our master and law-giver, even Christ, and all Christians are brethren*, Matt. xx. 25. In contradiction to these divine commands, the Roman pontiff grasps at universal empire, and lays claim to the kingdom of this world, and to the keys of Heaven. In temporal matters he assumes a power of discharging kings and subjects from their oaths, and of dissolving every band of society. In matters spiritual he assumes a power of binding and loosing, of retaining and remitting sin;—of putting men into a state of salvation or damnation, just as he pleases. The titles which have been given him, which he has accepted and encouraged, are, “his divine majesty; our Lord God, the pope; a sovereign monarch, who sustains the person and character of the om-

* Council of Trent, page 79, 82.

"nipotent God amongst men*." These are *some of the marks of blasphemy written on his forehead*. Thus this vicar of Christ resembles him, who was *meek and lowly in heart*, and who condescended to *wash his disciples feet*, John xiii. 5. Thus St. Peter's successor imitates the apostles, who claimed *no dominion over the faith of Christians*, but were content to be *helpers of their joy*. 2 Cor. i. 24.

Should I assert, that the almighty power of God cannot act impossibilities or reconcile contradictions, I should not fear to offend the divine Author of our being. Yet this is a small matter with Rome. Good is no longer good, when opposed to her measures: evil is no longer evil, when committed to promote her purposes. She suspends the whole moral law, even the eternal, immutable, reason of things. This she annihilates and creates anew at pleasure. There is no virtue, which she does not condemn; no vice, which she does not sanctify in turn. All nature is but a juggle in her hands.

That the common people are not to examine into their religion, but to take it implicitly from the church, is another principal doctrine of Popery. And it must be allowed, that this is a necessary principle to support schemes of doctrine, which bid defiance to reason and are inconsistent with the whole tenor of revelation. These things will not bear the light, nor stand a free and impartial trial; and therefore are sheltered under the covert of ignorance and

* Vid. Chandler's Account of a conference.

darkness. But can any thing be more absurd than such a conduct as this? 'Tis error only that is afraid of a full examination: it must always be for the advantage of truth to appear in as much light as possible; it wants but a fair field to make its defence, and to crown itself with victory. The Scripture itself is so far from debarring the people of their right of examining, that it enjoins and encourages it in the strongest terms. They were not the Scribes and Pharisees and doctors of the law, but the common people of the Jews, to whom our Saviour said, *Search the Scriptures*, John v. 39. The Bereans are greatly commended for their study of them, and for examining even the truth of the apostles doctrine by that standard, Acts xvii. 11. We find Timothy exhorted by St. Paul to adhere to the holy Scriptures, which from *a child* he had learned, *which were given by inspiration of God, and were profitable for doctrine—and instruction in righteousness*, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Beloved, says one apostle, *believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they be of God*, 1 John iv. 4. *Prove all things*, says another, *and hold fast that which is good*, 1 Thes. v. 20. Yet for all this the church of Rome has the face to forbid the people to read the Scriptures under pain of damnation. It is expressly ordained, that “if
“any of the people presume to read a translation of the Bible, unless they have a licence
“from the bishop, (a favour seldom obtained)
“they shall not receive the remission of their
“sins*.” Your Bibles, Christians, were Po-

* Ind. lib. prohib. reg. 4.

pery in power, must be all burnt. This book of God, this holy volume of inestimable treasure, your light in darkness, your comfort under affliction, your direction to Heaven, must be snatched out of your hands; and in its room, your hands must be filled with fabulous legends of fictitious saints, and false miracles; such as diseases instantly cured by relicks, speaking images, and travelling chapels, and other such extraordinary curiosities.——They make *void the law of God* by their impious traditions. They put out that light, which would expose the folly and wickedness of their conduct. They take away the *key of knowledge, so as neither to enter into the kingdom of God themselves; and those who are willing, they binder*, Luke xi. 52. Further,

The church of Rome teaches, that after consecration there remains no bread or wine in the sacrament of the Lord's supper; and that the substance of bread and wine are changed into the real body and blood of Christ. If this doctrine is true, then all evidence from sense must be rejected, and the whole structure of the Christian faith falls at once. The best proof we have for the truth of Christianity itself, arises from the evidence of sense; from the testimony of those, who were witnesses of our Saviour's miracles and of his resurrection. But according to the system of the Romish divines we must flight the information of sense, and pronounce a wafer to be flesh and blood: we must believe that Christ held his whole body in his hand and gave his whole body to be eat-

en; that it is whole in one place and broken in another: we must believe—that the accidents of bread subsist without their substance, and the substance of the human body without its proper accidents—that the priest has power to create God when he pleases. In short, than the doctrine of transubstantiation nothing can be more monstrous; unless it be the setting up of infallibility in the midst of such abominations. To teach things impossible to be true, and to maintain at the same time that the teachers of them cannot err, is such an indignity to the human understanding, and such an insult on common sense, as 'tis above the power of language to express.

To enumerate all the vile doctrines of this apostate church, and to expose them in their proper dress would lead us too far. Let it suffice to observe here, these boasters of infallibility take upon them to corrupt the Bible; to curtail the ten commandments; to multiply sacraments, to withhold from the people the cup of communion, to enjoin publick prayers in an unknown tongue, to sanctify vice by bulls of indulgence, and to fix certain prices to be paid for the commission of the most enormous sins. By the impurities of their mass the merits of Christ's death is denied, and by their fable of Purgatory, the terrors of a future punishment are defeated. They teach that without auricular confession and priestly absolution there can be no forgiveness with God; and that all the efficacy of the means of grace, and man's salvation itself, depends entirely on the inward

inward intention of the priest. This is the finishing stroke of ecclesiastical tyranny, and such as delivers over the deluded people, body and soul, into the dominion of the papal hierarchy.

Consider Popery in a religious view, and it must appear the just object of universal contempt: but consider it as a political contrivance to oppress the liberty and engross the property of mankind, and it will appear a refined scheme artfully adapted to answer that end. To obtain temporal dominion, the church of Rome begins with spiritual usurpation; and first enslaves the mind, in order to reduce the body to servitude. All virtue without her pale she terrifies by fines and imprisonments: all vice within she soothes and encourages by dispensations and pardons: by auricular confession she dives into every soul: by slight penances she lays hold on every purse. Give her all your interest on earth; and she readily compliments you with whatever interest she has in heaven: but to question her prerogative is infidelity and atheism: to dispute her decrees is downright impudence and daring presumption, and to disbelieve her ordinances is heresy: and heresy is temporal death and eternal damnation.

We proceed to shew,

Thirdly, That the principles and practices of the Romish church are cruel and tyrannical. The Christian religion is manifestly designed, and has the most direct tendency to conciliate men's affections, to compose their jarring tempers to harmony, and to promote universal peace.

The

The precepts and motives of the Gospel discountenance all fierceness and cruelty, all bitterness and wrath, all strife and variance: so does the conduct and example of our blessed Lord, the author and founder of our religion. *He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*, Luke ix. 56. to take away the hard and narrow heart, and to reconcile men to God, and to one another. He consented to the shedding no man's blood, but his own; and taught no ambition, but that of being *great in the kingdom of Heaven*, Matt. xviii. 4. His disciples he furnished with no other commission, but miracles and instruction; and with no other revenge, but prayers. Agreeable to the precepts and example of their master, the apostles declared that *the weapons of their warfare were not carnal*, 2 Cor. x. 4. *that the servant of the Lord must not strive*, 2 Tim. ii. 24. and that *the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak*, Rom. xv. 1. From the beginning of their ministry to the end of it, both Christ and his apostles breathed forth nothing but the purest love and most fervent charity. This is the temper and spirit of Christianity. How different the temper and spirit of the Roman religion! Most smooth and courteous indeed, while unarmed with power; but at other times most intolerant and unrelenting. Which persecutes with implacable fury, where her power reaches, all without exception, who dare deny the absurdities she commands to be believed, or refuse to practise the superstitions she enjoins:

which has probably destroyed more lives than all the ten heathen persecutions put together.

It will be retorted by the Romanists, that Protestants have often persecuted men for religious opinions. The fact is acknowledged and lamented. But in so doing they have shamefully deserted their principles, and apostatised from their profession : whereas persecution is a fundamental principle, an established article of Popery. It stands unrepealed upon record. Every weapon they use is sanctified ; every instance of fraud, every degree of violence is consecrated. Cruelty is not only allowed, but enjoined as a duty, and recommended as meritorious. No good nature of their own, no obligations from others, no ties of oaths and solemn assurances, no sense of honour nor awe of God are to restrain them from any thing, that is for the temporal advantage of their church. This is known to all who have read the fourth council of the Lateran and the council of Constance *. 'Tis there solemnly decreed that "faith is not to be
" kept with hereticks, and that all whom the
" pope condemns as such, are to be delivered
" up to the secular arm, to be burned without
" mercy."

But how absurd the principle ! How criminal the practice ! The pretence is to promote religion. But what is religion ? Is it to repeat a creed, to subscribe a confession, or to perform a ceremony ! No, surely. True religion is something more and better than all this. It consists

* Can. 3.

in doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, Micah viii. 8. In visiting the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. In a divine temper, and a divine life. It is a reasonable and voluntary service, flowing from the full conviction of the heart, and the approving sentiments of the inward man. And what can violence do towards producing this inward conviction? Can fines take away error, and banishment drive nearer to truth? Can dungeons illuminate the mind, and shackles free from prejudice? Can racking the limbs rectify the judgment, and burning the flesh purify the conscience? As reasonably might a man expect to beat down a wall by an argument, or to set a broken bone by a fine harangue, as to remove the errors of the mind by threats, and convince the understanding by tortures. Besides, persecution tramples on the rights of conscience, invades the prerogative of God, roots up the liberties of mankind, and spreads devastation and ruin, as far as its influence reaches. It is the offspring of Hell, of him, who was a *murderer from the beginning.*

And yet this diabolical principle is essential to Popery, and its great support. So steadily has it been adhered to, as to depopulate and lay waste towns and cities, nations and empires.

To this was owing the dreadful slaughter, occasioned by pope Julius, who in seven years destroyed no less than two hundred thousand. This proved the ruin of the Albigenes and Waldenses. Urged by the same principle the

duke of Alva put to death above thirty thousand in the Low Countries. That monster of cruelty, the court of inquisition, is said in about thirty years to have destroyed a hundred and fifty thousand by various kinds of torments: and still remains in Spain, Portugal, and Italy, in its most ghastly form, on purpose to hinder all free inquiry, and to keep mankind in the most slavish subjection to a hierarchy of ambitious, lazy, and debauched priests. The horrid massacre in France and Ireland can never be forgot. No humane, benevolent person, can read the account without weeping eyes, and a bleeding heart.—But we need not seek for foreign instances, since the history of our own nation will furnish undoubted proof, that this anti-christian church, for the promoting its interests and the extirpation of heresy, has not scrupled to consecrate treason and murder, and to commit such vile enormities, as a savage would start at, and a Heathen be ashamed of!

To her the matron's and the virgin's cries,
The screams of dying infants, and the groans
Of murder'd men, are musick!

This is no imaginary satyr, merely to embellish a discourse, or to raise the passions of men. The censure is just, and writ too deep in characters of blood and ruin, to be so much as denied by Papists themselves.—*O my soul! come not thou into their secret; unto their assemblies, mine honour be not thou united; while their anger is so fierce, and their wrath so cruel; Gen.*
xlix.

xlix. 6, 7. while dungeons and chains, racks and gibbets, and so many other instruments of cruelty, are in their habitation.

And now what shall we think of a church, that can erase the original sentiments of human nature, and transform men into creatures so very opposite to what God made them? Certainly, they who have read their Bibles cannot but discern, that Popery is not Christianity. “If
“blasphemy against God, and tyranny over
“men; if defacing the ideas of Deity, and cor-
“rupting the principles of moral honesty; if
“subverting the foundation of natural religion,
“and overthrowing the essential articles of the
“Christian faith; if all these are sufficient to
“exclude men from being part of the Chris-
“tian church, the Romanists can have no pre-
“tence to it.”

These were the sentiments of the first reformers: this is the judgment of the church of England; whose Homilies, set forth by authority, and subscribed to by her whole clergy at their ordination, say expressly, that “the church
“of Rome has been for the space of nine hun-
“dred years and odd, so far wide from the
“nature of the true church, that nothing can
“be more. And that, all they who have any
“light of God’s word must needs confess, that
“the bishops of Rome and their adherents are
“not the *true church of Christ* *.” Whence is it then, that some of her professed sons are so fond of deriving orders from this pretended

* Homily concerning the Holy Ghost, part 2.

church, and cry out of the insignificancy of all things else, without such orders? To vindicate themselves in this they now speak a softer language than their Homilies; and venture to assert that the church of Rome, this *mother of harlots*, which curses, and consigns to hell all the churches of the reformation, is the spouse of Christ, and a real part of the Christian church. These are fatal concessions. The natural consequence of them is the promoting the cause of Popery, and the subversion of the church of England; which may God, in much goodness, defend against all the attempts of Popery; and in his due time, and the gentlest manner, purge from any errors or corruptions, which may lessen the perfection of its beauty or holiness!

As for this *mystery of iniquity*, which hath long been at work, and doth even now work, with too much success; the Scriptures have assigned to it a limited line of time; (much the greatest part of which is probably run out) at the period whereof the *Lord shall consume this wicked one with the spirit of his mouth, and he shall go into perdition, Heaven and earth rejoicing over him.* 1 Theff. ii. 8. O Rome! haughty cruel Rome! Thou hast long glorified thyself, lived deliciously, and said in thy heart, *I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow: but thy sins have reached unto Heaven, and God will remember thine iniquities. Thy plagues shall come upon thee in one day: death and mourning, and famine; yea, thou shalt be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God, who judgeth thee.* Rev. xviii. 7, &c.

I would

I would close the subject with a few remarks suitable to the present occasion.

1. Let us be sincerely thankful to the great God of Heaven and earth for past deliverances from Popery and Slavery. There is no nation that hath been favoured with more remarkable appearances of Providence than this island. For a proof of this we need not look further than the reformation. Before this time we were overspread with darkness, and the *abomination, which maketh desolate* was set up amongst us. At length was raised up a resolute and haughty prince, who, as much out of humour, as principle, at once threw out the papal tyranny. His son, Edward the sixth, the wonder and admiration of the age, carried on the work, which was but imperfectly begun by his royal father. The bloody reign of queen Mary almost crushed the infant reformation: but for *the elect's sake God shortened those days*. After her the government was put into the hands of a princess of a great soul; against whom, besides many secret plots, the most bold and open attempt was the Spanish Armada; a design formed by the united councils and strength of the Popish party: but *he who holds the winds in his treasures let them loose upon the face of the great deep. The Almighty triumphed over them gloriously; their fleets and warriors he cast into the sea*. In the course of this reign there were many, who were heartily disposed to a further reformation; but the zeal of the popish party, and the stiffness of the queen prevailed. It is really wonderful, that so great an advance was made in reforming so

corrupt a state of things in so short a time, and under all the disadvantages of present circumstances: and it is equally wonderful, that it should be carried no further in so long a tract of time; and that the first essay of so great a design should come to be thought a perfect model, and a standard to all posterity.

With the personal character of princes we meddle not, and would speak of them with all the respect which is consistent with truth: but it will scarce be denied by any, that, after the days of Elizabeth, the English honour was sunk under a series of inglorious reigns; and a race of misled princes seemed to aim at making themselves little, and their kingdoms contemptible. In the reigns of the two Charles's, there were frequent alarms of public danger, and perpetual struggles for publick liberty. In the next reign there was an open design of bringing in Popery, which had been secretly favoured long before. On his accession to the throne, James the second laid himself under all obligations, divine and human, to preserve the constitution entire. Did he do it? Far otherwise. The Turk would have thought it his duty to adhere to such solemn engagements: but the royal sons of Rome are too mighty for the bonds of oaths. They promise through policy; but betray by principle. That unhappy prince, under the leading of bigots, and perversion of priests, sapped the very pillars of English liberty, and overturned the building of that glorious constitution, on which had been expended the wisdom, the blood, and the toil of many ages.

These

These were scenes of gloominess and darkness. These were days of horror and despair. Some of the eyes that saw these times are still open among us. When all was driving on in the most furious manner, and our ruin advancing with the greatest swiftness; then came our help, and we were saved from the hands of our enemies. God inspired a wise and brave prince for the undertaking, and crowned it with almost miraculous success. The immortal William saw the distress of languishing Britain: he saw: he came: he saved her. The spirit of tyranny failed, as the hero advanced; the fury of persecution fled before him, and Popery stole away in silence. To him we owe that we are Protestants; that we are free. To him, perhaps, the world is indebted, under God, that there is such a thing as liberty left upon the earth. He sacrificed his ease and health to the publick safety, and closed his life with settling the succession in the house of Hanover.

After his demise another prince arose, under whom the nation enjoyed great happiness for several years at home; and ten campaigns, not to be matched in history, rolled on with uninterrupted success in wars abroad. Fame sounded its trumpet, to publish through the world the glory of the British councils and the British arms: when all on a sudden the clouds gathered, in the prophet's phrase, *our sun went down at noon, and our land was darkened in a clear day.* Amos viii. 9. Our quiet was lost: our successes were stopped: our allies were deserted: the voice of fame was drowned by the hissings

hissings of envy, and the clamours of faction: the most zealous friends to the Protestant succession were disgraced; and schemes of slavery were formed. In this lowering, threatening conjuncture, when even the pretender to the crown was on the road to take possession, (as his own declaration informs us) divine Providence interposed, cut short the royal life in the critical moment, and brought the illustrious father of our present sovereign to the throne in peace;—a prince of great experience in government, and firmness of mind; not to be discomposed by insolence, or cajoled by flattery; not to be startled at danger, or betrayed into security; who maintained majesty without stiffness, and was brave without roughness. Whose religion was without bigotry, and who was constant without obstinacy; who always expressed an equal regard for all his subjects, and had nothing more at heart than his peoples welfare. Such was the prince, whom by a wondrous train of the most seasonable providences a gracious God sent to rescue us, when on the brink of ruin, and to bless us with his protection. The first of August is a day, that will stand distinguished in the British annals, and be remembered with honour and with transport, by all who love true religion and liberty.

Not long was his late majesty seated on his throne, before a rebellion broke out amongst us. A rebellion without a provocation, without a grievance. Men of mistaken principles, and restless spirits, joined with profest Papists at home, and conspired with foreign powers,
to

to root out the Protestant religion, and to set up a popish pretender to reign over a free and a Protestant people. *But God is known by the judgments which he executeth, and the wicked were snared in the works of their own hands.* Psal. ix. 5.

Our religion and liberties are once more endeared to us by a deliverance of a very late date. A few years since we beheld our country and its well-framed constitution threatened with utter destruction by an impious invasion, which, elated with repeated success, advanced into the centre of the kingdom, and struck the capital itself with no small terror. What paleness covered every face! What anguish filled every heart! But God scattered our fears and turned our sorrow into gladness. The presumptuous invaders *were beaten down and fled; and looked not back; for fear was round about.* Jerem. lvi. 5. Had the attempt succeeded, how vast a ruin must have followed! Then, farewell freedom and liberty of conscience; farewell the peaceful possession of the sanctuary and the pure religion of Jesus; farewell the inestimable privileges of the revolution, the purchase of so much blood and treasure. Then, soon should we have seen our rivers redden with Protestant blood, and the flames of martyrdom blaze in our streets. These are not mere conjectures, and distant probabilities; but the almost necessary consequences of the supposed success of our enemies. What could be expected from Rome, but Romish superstition and will-worship! What from France, but French tyranny and
 oppres-

admiration and a frothy joy; but shew our gratitude by a religious and well-ordered conversation.

'Tis not any excellency in us, that has made so vast a distinction between us and the nations around us. If our houses have not been plundered, 'tis not because the worship of God has been more constantly performed in them: if our air has not been filled with the noise and triumph of insulting foes; 'tis not because it has not been polluted with oaths and blasphemies. If our towns and cities are not turned into heaps of rubbish; 'tis not because they have been mountains of praise and habitations of holiness. We have all imaginable reason to say with the Psalmist, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name do we give the glory.*—

“ Oh Britain! thou nation saved and favoured
 “ of the Lord! If the supreme disposer has
 “ by signal interpositions so often delivered thee,
 “ plunged as thou art into so many excesses
 “ and enormities; what felicity would not attend thee, were a general reformation to prevail! Every one who wishes thy prosperity
 “ must wish a change in thy morals. For
 “ nothing is more certain than that the virtue
 “ of a nation, is its strength, and that it becomes weak in the degree it becomes corrupt.”——If ever Popery, that sure retreat of vice, over-powers us, immorality is the flood-gate, at which it enters; and our enemies found their hopes of success on our present debauchery.——A change of religion is no great stoop to those who have none.

2. Let

2. Let us *stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free*, and not suffer ourselves to be *entangled with any yoke of bondage*. Gal. v. 1. The cause of Protestantism is the cause of liberty and true religion.—Its genuine principles are the unalienable right of every man to judge and to act for himself in matters of religion; the sole authority of Christ in the Christian church, and the perfection of the Scripture-rule.—Whatever is not contained in the Bible is no part of the Christian faith; whatever is contrary thereto must be disclaimed. These are the foundation principles on which the whole fabrick of the Protestant reformation was at first raised, and on these alone can it be supported and defended. Happy had it been for the reformed churches, if these principles had been always faithfully adhered to, and a persecuting imposing spirit had been confined to that source of idolatry, to that sink of corruption, the church of Rome. But there would be great reason to accuse us of great partiality, should we alledge that none others are chargeable with any share in it. 'Tis in vain either to deny or dissemble the matter. There have been always too many among those, who have professed to throw off the corruptions of that church, that have been fond of retaining the usurped power of it; who in words indeed have disclaimed infallibility, but acted as if they were really possessed of it; who have formed creeds by votes, and explained articles of faith by holding up hands; who have been for making their own judgment, even in very abstruse points,

points, a rule to their fellow Christians, and for imposing it upon them not only by severe censures and an exclusion from their society, but likewise, when the civil power was on their side, by many temporal penalties. We forbear entering further on this unpleasant scene.

'Tis the peculiar glory of the present age, that a narrow spirit is much abated among us, and that the principles of religious liberty are better understood than in former times. Thanks to Heaven, thanks to our civil governors, we are quiet in our possessions and undisturbed in our places of social worship. Unawed by human authority, and uncontrouled by any human standard, we are permitted to enquire after the truth of God's word and to rest upon our inward sense of it. No man is lord over our faith; but our consciences are sacred to God. We may think freely, and we may also speak freely, on the side of liberty, the Bible and common sense, in opposition to tyranny, imposture and nonsense; without being in danger of the bastile or the inquisition; without any fear of angry synods, or enslaving ecclesiastics. These are great, these are desirable privileges. It concerns us not to abuse them; nor to neglect to improve them, but to be solicitous to secure them to ourselves, and to make others partakers of them. In speaking thus, there can be no impropriety; while I am supposed to address myself to an audience of Protestant dissenters, to such as know their principles, and who, we trust, will ever be careful with honour to support and by a consistent conduct to recommend them.

them. From the experience of past ages, from the whole history of Popery it is evident, that when Christians have once been prevailed upon to shut their eyes against the light of reason and the Scriptures, and tamely to resign their understandings to the guidance of crafty impostors, they have laid themselves open to all manner of delusion: no absurdities so great, no impieties so heinous, which they have not run into under the pretext of religion: even cruelty and persecution have been esteemed as Christian virtues; and deeds worthy of Hell have been considered as necessary in order to enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

But, Fellow-Protestants and Fellow-Christians, you have not so learned Christ. You have not learned, to pay a blind obedience to any, nor in matters of faith to acknowledge any other master but Christ. You have been taught that it is a most absurd attempt to force a believe of truth, and a most wicked practice to punish involuntary error. You have learned to distinguish betwixt authority and reason, human opinions and revealed truths. You don't think yourselves qualified to make any other terms of acceptance with God than what are already published in his word; and you need no other recommendation of any one to your sincere love and cordial affections, but his having the image of God, and the superscription of the holy Jesus stamped upon him.

Go on, ye beloved of the Lord, to assert and maintain your natural birthright, your Christian privileges. Go on to cultivate a generous

nerous and catholic spirit more and more. If there is any sense of honour, and any concern to preserve the dignity of human nature; *if there be any consolation in Christ, and any comfort of love*, let Popery, with whatever is derived from it, or resembles it, be your abhorrence; especially, that worst part of it, a domineering, persecuting spirit in all the branches and degrees of it. Let all violent averfions, and a bitter zeal, among Christians, at length subside. Let every invidious name of party-distinction perish for ever. * Let the unfriendly suspicion, the harsh censure, and shy behaviour, be no more. Let all that are servants of the same God, that walk by the same rule, and are going to the same Heaven, be dear to one another, however they may be distinguished by the diversity of their speculations, and external modes of worship.

Above all, we would exhort the friends of liberty, not to *use liberty as an occasion to the flesh, but to shew out of a good conversation, their works with meekness of wisdom*, James iii. 13. While they carefully guard against the transports of a wild zeal, let them with equal care avoid the opposite extreme of lukewarmness in the great business of religion; and to the love of truth let them join an ardent concern for solid piety and universal virtue. How strange the contrast! How inconsistent the character, to be professors of the reformed religion, and at the same time to have no religion at all! To be zealous Protestants, and yet not to be Christians all the while; but infidels in speculation,

and libertines in practice! *We hope better things of you, even things that accompany salvation.*

You will bear with us, if we beseech you, by the mercies of God in Jesus Christ, by all the regards you have to your best interest, to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour by living harmless and blameless without rebuke, as becomes the children of God, the heirs and expectants of Heaven; to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. Let the world see, that in your whole conduct you are governed by the dictates of the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

And, when! O! when, will the glorious day shine upon our world, when the religion of Jesus, cleared from that heap of suffocating rubbish that has been laid upon it, shall universally prevail over the whole human race, calm their furious passions, and inspire the most benevolent sentiments! When not only the flaming persecutor, but the little bigot, and the waspish zealot, shall be characters no where found on earth? When, setting aside all prejudice and prepossession, all party schemes, and selfish views, the disciples of Christ shall receive one another upon the true scriptural terms of Christian communion, and *with one heart and with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! When the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the*

kid! When there shall be no hurting or destroying in all God's holy mountain. Isa. xi. 6, &c. When truth and love shall embrace and reign! This happy, and prosperous state of the Christian church is in Scripture expressly promised, and will, we hope, ere long be erected. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

In the mean while, let our eyes be lifted towards Heaven in fervent prayer, that none of the artifices of the church of Rome may blind the eyes of the people against the immorality of her doctrines;—that the Protestant interest may be owned and propagated;—that the blessing of Heaven may rest upon all Protestant princes, and especially upon our only rightful sovereign king GEORGE, and every branch of his august family;—that pure, uncorrupted Christianity may every where take root and spread; and that Christians of all persuasions may live and behave in such a manner, as to meet at last in the general assembly above; where there are no angry disputes, or party quarrels, to pall the pleasure of conversation among the blessed society; where perfect light shall remove all difference of judgment, and perfect love heal all disaffection; where faith shall end in vision, but charity never fails. — God almighty grant this through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory in the churches. Amen.

S E R M O N XII.

On the Shortness and Vanity of Human Life.

By the Rev. Mr. FRANKLIN.

PSALM xc. 12.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

THERE is not any thing which morality can inculcate, or religion enjoin, that will more easily persuade men to a consideration of their latter end, and a necessary preparation for it, than the serious contemplation on the shortness and vanity of human life.

— This is an argument which requires no depth of wisdom to conceive, no superior faculties to discuss, but appeals to the senses, and speaks to the hearts of all men; and yet the senses of all men deceive, the hearts of all men betray them, and those things which should be for *their learning, are unto them an occasion of falling.*

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The certainty of death is perhaps among those truths, which, merely because they are obvious, we do not think sufficiently worthy of our attention; it is almost the only thing we know, and we treat it as if it were the only thing we were ignorant of. In the midst of life we are in death: but like hardy and fearless soldiers, though we are in the heat of the battle, though thousands fall beside us, and ten thousand on our right hand, yet, whilst we have society to animate, whilst we have hope to encourage, and all the noise and bustle of the war to divert our thoughts, we are strangers to fear, and insensible of our danger.

The goodness of the Almighty is alike visible in what it shews, and in what it conceals from us: God of his mercy hath thought fit to hide from our knowledge the fatal hour of our dissolution; because, were the prospect of death continually before our eyes, the affairs of this world could never be carried on with that cheerfulness and alacrity which are so highly requisite to the performance of them. It would damp all the faculties, and put a stop to all the efforts and designs of the human mind, and leave a gloom and horror upon it, too great for reason or reflection to remove: in short, were the sword perpetually hanging over our heads, the feast of life would afford us but little comfort in the enjoyment of it.

An eminent heathen writer, in an elegant discourse on the idle pursuits and enjoyments of men in this uncertain state, among many other sensible reflections put into the mouth of

one of his imaginary deities, thus ridicules the folly of mankind.

Look, says he, on that builder there, and think, what would he not rather do, though he now so industriously presses on the labourer to finish his costly mansion, did he know it should be no sooner built but that he must die, and leave the possession of it to his heir, ere he, poor wretch, shall have had even once the pleasure of supping in it.

Or look on him who hugs himself on his becoming a father, entertains his friends at a feast of joy, and calls the boy by his own name. If he knew this darling child should never outlive his seventh year, would he, think you, be so wanton at his birth? But he fondly imagines himself happy in a child who shall hereafter be crowned in the Olympic games, and observes not at the same time his afflicted neighbour carrying out his son to the last fire.

Thus could an unenlightened heathen laugh at, and expose the folly and vanity of mankind, and deservedly reproach them for not considering their latter end. If their behaviour in a point so important was a proper subject of ridicule, what shall we say to those to whom life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel of Christ? We who have such threats to alarm, and such hopes to encourage us, ought not we to be wiser, to understand better, to number our few days, and seriously to consider and prepare for our latter end?

But

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But that the weight and importance of the precept in my text may appear the more plainly, it may not be amiss to consider and enforce it in the various stages of this our short journey; that men may be convinced how necessary it is to *number their days, and apply their hearts unto wisdom.*

To those therefore who are in the spring of life, I would first address myself; those who are yet untainted by false principles, and uncorrupted by bad example. Let us send up our offerings to the Almighty, whilst we have something worthy of his acceptance: our loyalty to our sovereign will then be most meritorious, when the enemy is using every method to alienate our affections from him; let us not make a merit of resigning what we can no longer maintain, but when the passions are most importunate, and the appetites most unruly, yield them up to the guidance of reason and religion: with such sacrifices God is well pleased. To whom should we dedicate the temple but to him that raised it; or who is more worthy of the first fruits than he who gave us the whole harvest?

If in the days of our youth we remember our Creator, we may rest assured he will not forget us in our more advanced years; if we give the earlier part of life to religion, habit will strengthen reason, and self-love side with virtue. When the mind has long employed itself on any particular study, it contracts a fondness and partiality not easily removed; besides that the elder brass of the soul either to-

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wards good or evil, will ever claim the privilege of its birth-right, and assume an authority over the future conduct of our lives.

With how much care and caution therefore are the first tendencies of youth to be observed ! How much may their happiness, both here and hereafter, depend upon them ! It has of late years been too often observed, that the foolish vanity of parents hath conspired with the natural forwardness of their children, to ruin and destroy them, by pushing them too early into the business and pleasures of a licentious age. Our youth have found out methods to antedate old age, and hasten the footsteps of death, to crowd their vices into as short a space as possible, and fill up as soon as they can the measure of their iniquity. They scorn to owe their infirmities to grey hairs, or their decay to nature ; but without ever numbering their few days, are quickly worn down by vice and debauchery, and hurry themselves out of the world at an age when their forefathers were scarce entered into it.

Pass we on then from the slippery and dangerous paths of youth to the middle state of manhood ; here our feet tread firmer, and our labour grows more easy.——Judgment steps in to our assistance ; the voice of reason is clearer and more distinct ; the violent and tumultuous passions begin to subside : but, because the waves are less disturbed, and the storm a little blown over, we must not therefore fancy ourselves in the haven ; we are as loth to consider our latter end, and to think on the one thing needful

at this time as at any period of our lives. In infancy and in youth every toy can please, and every novelty delight; and as we advance in years we do not lay aside, but change the bauble; our amusements are still as idle as before, and only not so innocent. When we are talking to men, to put them in mind that they were men, would one should think be a sufficient reproof; it is then high time to *put away childish things, and apply our hearts unto wisdom*; to reflect that the hour is come when there is no dallying with life, when youth can no longer excuse our errors, nor inexperience palliate our crimes, and every sin is aggravated and inflamed by our own knowledge and consciousness of it. And yet I know not how it is, but in this stage of life we are still liable to the temptations of pleasure, and all those vices which are strengthened and improved by habit; besides that the common business and affairs of life call away our attention, and will not let our affections there be fixed, where only true joys are to be found. We apply our hearts, in short, too much to the wisdom of this world to reflect as we ought on the important concerns of the other.

Come we then to the last and closing scene.—When the hot summer of life is over, we enjoy a short and sickly autumn, and quickly drop into the winter of our days. And here we cannot help observing that vice, which in youth is pitiable, which in manhood is indecent, becomes in age most shameful and most detestable. One would think the approach of death, the
decay

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decay of nature, and the infirmities always attendant on this period might teach men at last to reflect, and to repent; that when the glass runs low, we should watch every grain of sand as it flows out.

But those who have least health and strength are often most careless of it. And men of experience in the world will tell us, none are so prodigal as bankrupts; as thought and reflection become more necessary, they grow also more distasteful; when our little store of days is almost exhausted, we are afraid to look into the account lest we should discover our poverty; and like sick men would shun the mirror which too faithfully points out their decay, and makes them startle at their own deformity.

If such there be, and such there doubtless are amongst us, dangerous indeed is their condition. Where the disease of vice has grown to such a malignancy, and become habitual to the constitution, common medicines have not the power to act; the usual remedies are applied in vain. The grace of God indeed may intervene, may save our eyes from tears, and our feet from falling into everlasting destruction. If we can once strike out of the paths of vice, and turn into the road of virtue, a willing mind will carry us a great way on in a very little time, and it is never too late to begin to be happy.

In youth, therefore, in manhood, and in age; in every short portion of this uncertain state, let us now and then reflect on our condition, let us *number our days*, and *apply our hearts unto wisdom*. Short as our lives are, and
uncertain

uncertain as their end, yet are we none of us without warning given. For, what I beseech you are the calamities, what are the diseases and the deaths of our friends, but angels sent to us from the Almighty on messages of love and tenderness? sent for our warning and for our instruction. What indeed are all those friendly admonitions of our approaching dissolution which God gives us, but the strongest proofs of his unbounded and unspeakable mercy towards us? to wean our affections from things below, by rendering life day by day less desirable. Every year steals away something from us; in one we lose a relation, in the next a friend; health grows more precarious, and pleasure less alluring; till by degrees the whole little mass of happiness we had been gathering drops from us insensibly, and that grave we had once looked on with so much horror, becomes at last our refuge and our shelter.

Surely then, to change these kind admonitions, these paternal chastisements designed to restrain our follies, and engage us in the practice of virtue, into incentives of vice, and allurements to sin and wickedness, is a mark of the utmost depravity which human nature is capable of falling into. There are men who reverse the excellent precept of my text, who *number their days* that they may apply their hearts not unto *wisdom* but unto *folly*. *Let us eat and drink*, say they, *for to-morrow we die*. Come, let us enjoy the good things that are present; being extinguished, our bodies shall be turned into ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the soft
air.

air. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they be withered. Thus the terrors of death, and the dark prospect of the grave, instead of exciting us to a serious preparation for them, only serve as foils to set off the charms of pleasure, which are already but too engaging.

But what unmanly, what low and irrational pleasures will not men stoop to, the better to shake off the insufferable load of time! How industrious are we grown of late in filling up every vacuity! lest a moment's thought or reflection should drop into our cup of folly, and embitter the whole draught.

Whence arises the plentiful field of diversions, the gaudy shifting scene of entertainments which the fashionable world is every day employed in? It is not that we are richer, happier, or wiser than our ancestors; no, it is the direct contrary, it is because we are poorer, sillier, and more miserable. Our large stock is reduced to a morsel, and penury has made us careless of it; we are poor, and to forget our poverty, we lavish away the small remainder: vicious, and that we may not reflect that we are so, we plunge deeper into vice: we are, in short, as extravagant as if we were rich, and just as gay as if we were innocent.

In this manner we go on, forgetful of the great business and design for which we were created, in a continued round of fatal and destructive pleasures; though life is every day changing, the change is unperceived; though we

we are every hour approaching nearer to the grave, yet the descent is so gradual, the decay so imperceptible, that we scarce know we are going down hill, till we are almost at the bottom: till age and infirmity, those unwelcome messengers, come to inform us of a disagreeable truth we are very loth to give credit to.

Whilst, instead of pursuing our journey, like thoughtless travellers, we turn aside into every by-path that invites us, and let our eyes wander after every object that can amuse them, the day closes in, night comes upon us on a sudden, and we are quickly swallowed up in darkness and the shadow of death.

When the estate indeed is almost spent, then nothing appears so amiable as frugality; when we are just upon the point of losing our treasure, we begin to know the value of it; we repent too late, and then would fain step back, as it were, to do that great business which we had all our lives neglected.

O that men would therefore be wise! that they would consider their latter end! Delay is a subtle and dangerous thief which cheats us both of present and future happiness. Let us then redeem the time; not idly throw away our youth, our health, and our spirits on idle amusements, and leave the vast concerns of eternity to the mercies of a moment. Let us consider, that though God hath promised pardon to our repentance, he hath not also promised life till we repent.

We have much to do, and but little, very little time to do it in. Let us count over our
small

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small stock, and husband it with the utmost caution, ever remembering that idle hours, as well as idle words, must one day be accounted for; and that heaven is not reserved for the slothful and indolent, but for those only *who work out their own salvation*. Let us not flatter ourselves; that because the debt of nature is not yet required of us, we are therefore entirely discharged of it; though we cannot tell the time, the time will infallibly come, *but of that day and hour knoweth no man*.

What remains then, but that we bid adieu to our sins, that *we break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us*; now that we have time, now that we have health, vigor and activity, *before those days come when we shall say we have no pleasure in them*. Let us employ our time then in the service of God and of our fellow-creatures, that at the last and great day, those fellow-creatures may intreat for us, and that God reward us. Let us spend our youth in the search of truth, and our riper years in the practice of it. To conclude, let us all so number our days in this world, that they may be crowned with glory and happiness in that which is to come.

Now to God the Father, &c.

S. E. R.

S E R M O N XIII.

Consistency of the Christian Character
recommended.

By the Rev. Mr. RADCLIFF.

2 T I M. ii. 19.

*Let him that names the name of Christ depart
from all iniquity.*

A MORE express and positive precept of religion cannot be enjoined: the most subtle wit cannot break the force of this commandment, or interpret away its plain meaning and spirit. To be pure and guiltless, is not merely the dictate of prudence and delicacy, a maxim of convenience, or a caution of interest, but a duty of Christianity, which can never be dispensed with. Was thy religion, blessed Lord, ever accused of lessening the obligations of virtue, establishing faith on the ruins of morality, or giving countenance to iniquity? Impious as-
person!

person! Christ *came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*; and though by believing in him, we have a right to call ourselves by his name, yet, without constant and persevering obedience, we can never approve ourselves his friends and disciples, or expect his final acceptance.

The epistle to which the text belongs, is one of the most instructive of St. Paul's writings, and is a collection of the most useful and invaluable maxims, the fruits of experience gained upon earth, and *wisdom descended from above*. Timothy was his favourite pupil, just entering upon that perilous but sacred office he was going to resign; whatever therefore he writes at such a season, and to so intimate a friend, deserves peculiar attention; for as no man laboured more in the propagation of the Gospel, none could be better qualified to understand and explain it.

He that names the name of Christ, let him depart from all iniquity. In further discoursing from these words, I only propose to consider, what they directly imply and point out to us: — “The peculiar obligations Christians are
 “ under, by the very nature of their profession,
 “ to *depart from iniquity*, and adorn their Character by a holy conversation and godliness.”

I shall not take up your time with producing new and singular arguments in favour of Christianity; if men will not hear the testimony of prophets, and eye witnesses, neither will they be persuaded *though one rose from the dead*. I shall suppose you to be sincere believers in the Mediator of the new covenant, convinced of the
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excellence and truth of the Gospel of peace, not carelessly embracing this profession, because no other offered itself, but as the most amiable name given under Heaven; the object of your esteem, the pledge of your present happiness, and the security for your future glory: possessed of such a faith, you have only to add a consistent practice to render your religion perfect and complete; and indeed they agree so happily when united, that it is a pity they should ever be separated. God has joined them together, but *mens* controversies and passions have put them asunder; however, to adjust the difference betwixt them once for all, and to prevent any disputes about names, when we speak of faith, we mean *that which works by love*, and is manifested by a constant series of good works; when we mention good works, we mean no other but those which are produced, animated, and carried to the highest perfection (that human performances can attain) by a principle of living and unshaken faith.

To proceed to my intended purpose, I shall observe;

I. We must either renounce iniquity, or disclaim Christianity: They are so opposite and inconsistent in their nature, that they can never be reconciled; they subsist and flourish by each other's destruction, and must have an absolute dominion over the heart, or no interest in it at all. It is the very Character of our profession, *to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this evil world*, without which it is absurd to call ourselves Christians.

The religion of Christ is not a fanciful hypothesis, started by a projecting philosopher, or the craft and invention of a politician, or a set of doubtful opinions; it does not consist in entertaining a system of singular and refined notions, which nobody ever thought of before: God forbid it should ever degenerate so low. No; it is the art of living well; it is a plan of religious education for immortality, adapted to the heart, and calculated to renew and transform its sentiments; it is a scheme of heavenly conversation, formed on the model of our Saviour's life, and assisted and perfected by the promises of his word, and the influences of his spirit: it takes the deepest root and yields the most amiable fruits when planted in the humble, sincere, penitent soul; and the candid, mild, resigned disposition, is better prepared to receive it, than the abilities and capacity of the acutest understanding. It is not sufficient in words and declarations to acknowledge the Lord that bought us, if our allegiance is not confirmed by our deeds, for they are the only genuine and substantial marks of affection we can give. The tenor of our lives, and the temper of our minds, determine our Character, and decide the principles which govern us.

Had it been the intention of the Gospel merely to correct the judgment, and explode a few popular mistakes, it would answer all its purposes to entertain just sentiments concerning it; yet we are told we may embrace the purest doctrines, and be free from all errors of opinion, without being finally accepted.

It is dishonouring Christianity to think it has no nobler object in view, than to fill the head with idle speculations, or useless and indifferent notions; it is framed so as to strike all the powers of the soul, to interest every passion, to raise our indignation, horror, transport, gratitude, by setting full before us the joys and miseries of the invisible world: it is an inward conviction of mind, which does not change like other principles, with fashion and custom, but remains steady and uniform in the frowns as well as the smiles of the world, in adversity, affliction, and death. Was it worthy of the Son of God to come down from Heaven to introduce a new denomination amongst men, to advance a new system of philosophy, to invent some paradoxes, to enter the lists with philosophers, and furnish subjects for controversy and debate: nothing can be farther from such a design than his Gospel. Alas! that it should ever have been so monstrously interpreted, and so unjustly degraded! Its contents are the same with those of nature and providence: its design concurs with all the dispensations of the divine will that have been made in time past; and the sole object of it is to make men virtuous, happy, and immortal. Can they be Christians then in right of a bare assent to its truth? Can they be Christians, and be actuated by dispositions utterly opposite to its nature and spirit? Its purpose is to promote inward holiness; to save its followers from sin and perdition; to raise up into a pure spotless church, *a peculiar people zealous of good works.* Can these

ends answered then by wearing an empty badge of distinction, by calling him Rabbi, Master, Lord? Men may be followers of other teachers from a conformity of opinion, without any alteration of heart or conduct; but they cannot be thine, thou Saviour of sinners, without *departing from all iniquity*. Without this we are wanting in the fundamental qualifications of our profession; without this we abolish all title to his friendship, disclaim all communion with his spirit, forfeit all right to his acceptance, and cut ourselves off from the assembly of his people for ever.

II. We are not only bound to *depart from all iniquity* by the ties of our religion, which is of a practical nature, but by a principle of gratitude, for those obligations which Christ has laid us under. By the discoveries and promises of his gospel, he has removed all those fears, doubts, difficulties, which terrified, perplexed, and discouraged mankind in the pursuits of virtue; he has drawn up that veil which concealed the view of future glory, corrected those errors which ignorance had conceived of the majesty of God, and made that conviction of guilt, which before banished us from the throne of Heaven, the most powerful motive to drive us thither, and the best foundation of our acceptance. What stronger motives can there be to gratitude?—and, What sincerer gratitude, than a life of unblameable obedience? A believer in Moses might be tempted to indulge himself in some offences from a mistaken notion, which the Jews were too apt to fall into,
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that he could by the sacrifice of his substance atone for the sin of his soul: a follower of the Pagan religion might think to vindicate his irregularities, by pretending, that amidst such a number of gods, he knew not which to worship, and so many uncertain opinions, about a future state, he knew not which to believe: But what has an immoral Christian to urge in his defence? That he has not sufficient encouragements to renounce iniquity? What can he desire more than the favour and assistance of God, the forgiveness of his sins, and an eternal recompence of glory and happiness? What does he think of that multitude of precious promises, which belong to the sincere penitent, or of that cloud of witnesses which are perpetually animating him to seek that *better part which shall never be taken from him*? He cannot pretend that his duty is dark and obscure, for he has *line upon line, and precept upon precept*. He cannot except against religion as a painful servitude, for *the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light*. He cannot maintain that the hopes of immortality are weak and precarious, since they are confirmed to him by all the assurances that God can give, and all the evidence man can receive.

These are very important thoughts; dismiss them not before you have given them a very serious consideration. Let us recollect, that we might have been placed in the lowest rank of human being, limited to the narrowest views of knowledge and happiness, bewildered with doubts and errors, and little advanced above

the brutes of the field ; instead of this we can trace the wonders of providence that have been displayed from the creation of the world, pursue the footsteps of infinite mercy in every revelation of its will, through successive periods, till it was perfectly declared by the Son of God ; we can see our beginning and our end, and rejoice in the hope that *all things shall work together for our good*. Do not such happy circumstances as these imply uncommon duties, and demand of us peculiar acknowledgments ? Yes, our privileges are great, and our gratitude ought to be distinguished ; our hopes are boundless, and our danger is terrible. If any person believes, that the appearance of Christ was planned by the eternal love of God ; that it was attended by every circumstance of tenderness and affection that could make it godlike and divine ; that the sole purpose of it was to root sin and misery out of the world ; that in effecting this, he laboured with unwearied diligence, contended against passion and prejudice, spent a life of watching and prayer, and at last bowed down his soul unto death ; if he believes, that this Redeemer, though now exalted to his throne in Heaven, still sympathises with his followers, rejoices in their fidelity, encourages their perseverance, and does not think himself compleatly glorified, till he has gathered all his disciples round him ; if he can believe these things, and still persist in iniquity, what he may call himself I know not, but he is not a man, and has not the common principles of human

human nature. Is it thus that you requite the loving kindness of the Lord, and recompence the favours of your benefactor? You would have been under the great law of nature, by the reason of your own minds; and if your views are enlarged by the light of revelation, your duty and zeal must be proportionably extended. Besides the authority of God, you have your own vows and declarations to answer for, which bind the ties of conscience still stronger, and make it more criminal to disobey. A profession is a public promise made before all the world, which every honest man will think himself as much obliged to fulfil, as any private contract whatsoever. Now he *that names the name of Christ*, engages to obey his laws, becomes accountable to him for his life and conduct, pledges his honour and veracity in confirmation of his fidelity, enters into covenant with him, in which he parts with the criminal pleasures of the present world, for the pure joys of a future one; and if he fails in his performance, what has he to expect *but fiery indignation*? The more happy he would be in living up to his profession, the more miserable he must be in renouncing it; the more indulgent the parent who commands, the more ungrateful the son who disobeys; the more excellent the reward, the more bitter the punishment; the more plain and reasonable the commandment, the more inexcusable the breach of it; the more advantages he enjoyed, the more complete and irretrievable must be his final condemnation. These are the dictates of rea-

son, and if we appeal to the testimony of revelation, we shall find them dreadfully confirmed. Is there not, great God, some signal vengeance reserved for those who so ungenerously trample upon thy mercy? Can it be possible that ingratitude, discoloured by so many crimes, and aggravated by so many obligations, can escape with impunity? Can there be the least hope, that the eternal distinctions of justice will be confounded; that the divine goodness will spare its most inveterate enemies; that the threatnings of Scripture are nothing but a dream? Then we may be safe in contemptuously rejecting *so great a salvation*.

III. Let Christians *depart from all iniquity*, because this is not only obeying the laws of their master, but being of the same mind, and imitating his example. It is natural to copy the manners of a great preceptor, and we can never be said truly and heartily to embrace his principles, till we imbibe his spirit, and feel his genius transferred into our hearts. Christ was not only the author of the sublimest sentiments, but the pattern of the purest manners; and unless we are transformed into his Character, we shall be wanting in the best proofs of friendship and relation. Indeed it is a common observation, that similarity of desires and actions, is the only security of affection and friendship; therefore, let them blush to *name the name of Christ*, who have nothing in their natures like him, nothing to give them the least claim to his regard. It is not the external respect they express that will avail:—What do they discover

cover in their actions and lives worthy of his notice? The author of their faith was pure, undefiled, and separate from all sin; and, what are they?—Polluted with guilt, and enslaved to criminal appetites and passions. Their master was meek, benevolent, and resigned; and incredible as it may seem, they are haughty, envious, revengeful: *his kingdom was not of this world*; not of this world! and what makes his followers then covetous, ambitious, and worldly minded? *His delight was to do the will of him that sent him*: and can you believe it? Their chief end is to gratify their own vicious inclinations, whatever duties and restraints stand in the way. Judge then of the nature of their profession, and the sincerity of their pretensions. The genuine mark of his followers is not any outward distinction, but an inward principle of devotion which is continually forming and moulding their minds into a resemblance of his sacred image. It is not he who pays him the officious compliment of approving his doctrines, that will be adopted into his family and kingdom, *but he who does the will of his Father who is in Heaven*. Don't think that his Gospel, attested as it is by angels and men, requires the countenance and sanction of your authority. The ark of God wants not your reluctant hand to support it; his religion will stand whether you believe it or no; and if your profession of his name be not sustained by a suitable Character, he disdains your idle vote, rejects your pretended alliance, and will be revenged of your perfidious friendship. We may, perhaps, defend

send his doctrine with accuteness and zeal, and it is well : but what benefit will it be to carry out of the world with us his name only ; to have a title which will stand us in no stead ; to wear a profession which will be no passport into his presence ; to be followers whom he must disown ; servants whom he cannot patronize ; children whom he must disinherit ; friends whom he cannot acknowledge, and whose prayers he will despise in the day of trouble ?

IV. and lastly. Let Christians *deny all ungodliness*, otherwise they will reflect disgrace upon religion, and injure the cause of Christ which they pretend to respect. It sets iniquity in a horrible and dreadful light, when it is considered, that it extends its fatal effects far and wide, and involves, besides the unhappy person who practises it, many others, who are seduced by its example, into irretrievable ruin. Our conduct will either improve our fellow-creatures or corrupt them ; either glorify or dishonour *our Father which is in Heaven*. A wicked life in a Christian is an indignity upon his master, and an outrage committed upon the Gospel, in the disguise of a friend. It seems to declare either that this religion tolerates and countenances immorality, or that it has not sufficient authority to enforce its own laws, or, that it is very doubtful whether it comes from God or no : if it is liable to such a construction, let us consider the nature of this crime. Is this the recompence the merciful Son of God deserved at our hands ? he who was *meek and lowly in heart*,—who never did injury to man ;—injury ! he who

who did nothing but acts of kindness; who was never more happy than when he was wiping away the tears of affliction, and binding up the broken hearted. Lessening his reputation, is standing up against the interests of mankind, joining all the enemies of human nature, violating the first dictates of justice;—a conduct which every generous heart must resent. Well might our Saviour say, *Many good works have I done among you, for which of these do you stone me?* I have loved you from the beginning; while I was in the world I sought neither its profits nor its pleasures; I saw it in corruption and despair, and I pitied it; forgive me this wrong. I exposed none but the hypocrite; I disappointed no honest enquirer after truth; I threatened none but the presumptuous sinner; I admonished them of their danger but they listened not; I would *have gathered them under my wings but they refused*: I reminded them of the terrors of everlasting punishment, and I opened to them the kingdom of Heaven; my designs were suspected and accused of treason, and I vindicated them at a human bar; my blood was demanded by the people, and I cheerfully gave it them: I rose from the dead notwithstanding the vigilance of their guards, and shewed them how impotent was their rage; I appeared to all who were disposed to believe what they saw, and the rest would only have had their unbelief more obstinately confirmed; I bequeathed all that was useful to be known, and necessary to be practised for eternal happiness; my religion I left to the world, and it

was not lost; though despised it grew, though persecuted it triumphed; the conquerors of the world could not conquer it; those who were trained up in the idolatry of the Gentiles, and the bigotry of the Jews, rejected it, and the same ingratitude that was shewn to my person, was offered to my memory by a prejudiced world; but from you, my friends, I expect a different treatment; if ye are my friends, ye will *depart from all iniquity*; if ye *love me*, ye will *keep my commandments*; if ye obey my laws, the world will believe; if ye break them, my enemies will blaspheme. This is the language which rises out of the New Testament, and which we may imagine the absent Saviour is constantly using every time we are assembled in his name. If these things are so, *What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness.*

But to proceed further: perhaps ye who deny nothing to religion, but the testimony and honour of an upright heart, would not dare in so many words to call Christianity a cunningly devised fable, you would shudder at the thoughts of shaking the credit of those principles upon which man's happiness so greatly depends; you would be the last to reject revelation upon the authority of a few difficulties, which present themselves to all human enquiries. Astonishing inconsistency! you do the cause of Christ more harm than all the infidels in the world: their objections have been answered times without number;—but, who can answer that drawn from the wicked lives of those who call themselves

selves Christians? Integrity and good sense will be a sufficient security against the subtlety and refinement of evil minded men; but what shall guard even the honest against the doubts and scruples which bad examples suggest?

Let our adversaries bring all their forces into the field: let them erect their strong holds, and point all their rage against the sincere believer: vain madness! he cannot fall, he is founded upon a rock. But when he sees the hypocrite putting on the mask of piety more fatally to deceive; to-day celebrating the festival of his Lord, and to-morrow the revels of sin; saluting the Redeemer with words sweeter than honey, and reviling him with actions bitterer than gall; he is staggered and confounded at so strange a conduct; he is shocked at the inconsistency of human nature; he wonders such ingratitude is not punished by avenging heaven; he distrusts the influence of that religion which cannot stand against a single temptation; his zeal abates; his perplexities croud upon his mind; his heart misgives him; he is reproached for another's crimes; what can he say? I thought religion to be something more than a name. Gracious God, relieve his mind. Alas! it is too late; he has made the last unhappy resolution; his enemies rejoice, his friends weep; religion has lost an advocate, and the world has one triumph more:—but—his blood will be required at your hands.

To believe all Christianity teaches, and to neglect all its commands, is in effect asserting, that notwithstanding the strictness of its laws,
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and the severity of its terms, it can dispense with obedience sometimes, and admits members to its communion upon much easier conditions, than is generally imagined. It asperses the Author of truth with establishing and promoting a lie; nay, worse than a lie; a scheme of tolerating iniquity by making it consistent with salvation: it places the Mediator of the new covenant in the rank of an impostor, and a slanderer, who bends his laws to suit the prejudices of the world, and condemns vice in others, only to indulge it in his followers. In the name of your best friend, let not so heavy a charge lie at your door; wipe off so foul a dishonour from the Christian name, and let not these things be once named among you.

Let me not be mistaken; it is not a just conclusion, that because a man's life is bad, his principles must necessarily be false. The truth of Christianity, unshaken by human passions, will remain the same whether its advocates adorn it or no; for it is built not on the wisdom of men, but the power of God. But this is an inference which the world will draw. They judge of mens sentiments by their actions, and as they construe misfortunes into judgments, so they resolve wicked practices into wrong notions. There are but few who are judges of just reasoning, but all feel the force of a virtuous example. There is something peculiarly eloquent and convincing in an upright and blameless conversation, which will wear away the most inveterate prejudices, and bring over
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an adversary better than the most animated declamation.

The fortitude^o and resignation of the primitive Christians under persecution; the sobriety, charity, and goodness for which they were so universally celebrated, supplied the place of miracles to the unbelieving Gentiles; and had it not been for that exalted pitch of virtue by which they were superior to the rest of mankind, their religion would never have drawn attention; it might perhaps have been tolerated by the complaisance of the heathens, but must at last inevitably have sunk into oblivion.

In this case a modest unbeliever of antient days would naturally have said, "Will you persuade me that your master was more divine than Socrates or Plato, while his religion does not make you more conscientious, just, devout, and benevolent, better members of society, better men;—either you don't really believe what you pretend, or what you believe is nothing but an empty speculation; and let your witnesses be never so numerous, your evidences never so strong, you may gain my assent by your arguments to-day, and to-morrow by your lives you will make me an infidel again."

But to make the best use of the foregoing observations, let us remember, that if the practice of iniquity tends to injure the name and Character of our Lord, by abstaining from it we shall recommend his cause, and advance his glory; by adorning the Gospel of our Saviour, we hold it out as an object of admiration and
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excellence that cannot be resisted; by displaying throughout a pure conversation the peace and charity it inspires, we shew that its genuine fruits are righteousness, happiness, and assurance for ever; we ensure its success, and silence all its adversaries. Under these auspicious effects, it will recover its wonted glory; it will go forth conquering and to conquer; it will lead sin and superstition captive; it will be continually adding to its laurels and its victories, till it has gained a complete triumph over the passions and prejudices of men, and bowed the world to its generous dominion. Who would not contribute to the advancement of so good a cause? Who would not wish to be an instrument in so glorious a design, and lend his hand and his heart to build up the church of Christ, to bring so much honour to God, and so much happiness to his fellow-creatures? I see the emulation that is kindling in your breasts; I hear the noble resolutions you are forming; I pray God to increase them, and I wish you prosperity in the name of the Lord. Thus you will shew yourselves to be sincere friends, true believers, faithful disciples, and your service will not be forgotten, when your *Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.*

By the ties and obligations therefore of our common Christianity, I beseech you to remember *the vows of God which are upon you.* Consider what you owe to him *who bore the contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you should be weary and faint in your minds.* As you would be true to your trust, as you would be consistent

in your profession, as you would be faithful to your rank, station, and name; as you would maintain your character in the world, be mindful of that superior relation in which you stand as Christians; as you are distinguished by the noblest name among men, preserve its dignity, *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called*; as you wish well to the gospel of Christ, do not sully it by an inconsistent conduct; do not expose it to the derision of fools and libertines; exert all your efforts and leave the rest to God; consecrate the small remnant of your lives to him who gave them, to him who redeemed them; so shall you acquit yourselves with honour, and whatever becomes of the world, you shall be received into everlasting mansions.

S E R M O N XIV.

Job's Account of the Shortness and
Troubles of Life, considered.

By the Rev. Mr. STERNE.

J O B xiv. 1, 2.

*Man that is born of a woman, is of few days, and
full of trouble:—he cometh forth like a flower,
and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow,
and continueth not.*

THERE is something in this reflection of
holy Job's, upon the Shortness of Life,
and instability of human affairs, so beautiful
and truly sublime; that one might challenge
the writings of the most celebrated orators of
antiquity, to produce a specimen of eloquence,
so noble and thoroughly affecting. Whether
this effect be owing in some measure, to the
pathetick nature of the subject reflected on;—
or to the eastern manner of expression, in a stile
more exalted and suitable to so great a subject,

or

or (which is the more likely account) because they are properly the words of that Being, who first inspired man with language, and taught his mouth to utter, who opened the lips of the dumb, and made the tongue of the infant eloquent;——to which of these we are to refer the beauty and sublimity of this, as well as that of numberless other passages in holy writ, may not seem now material; but surely without these helps, never man was better qualified to make just and noble reflections upon the Shortness of Life, and instability of human affairs, than Job was who had himself waded through such a sea of Troubles, and in his passage had encountered many vicissitudes of storms and sunshine, and by turns had felt both the extremes, of all the happiness, and all the wretchedness that mortal man is heir to.

The beginning of his days was crowned with every thing that ambition could wish for;——he was the greatest of all the men of the East,——had large and unbounded possessions, and no doubt enjoyed all the comforts and advantages of life, which they could administer.——Perhaps you will say, a wise man might not be inclined to give a full loose to this kind of happiness, without some better security for the support of it, than the mere possession of such goods of fortune, which often slip from under us, and sometimes unaccountably make themselves wings, and fly away.——But he had that security too,——for the hand of providence which had thus far protected, was still leading him forwards, and seemed engaged in the pre-

servation and continuance of these blessings ;— God had set a hedge about him, and about all that he had on every side, he had blessed all the works of his hands, and his substance increased every day. Indeed even with this security, riches to him that hath *neither child or brother*, as the wise man observes, instead of a comfort, prove sometimes a sore travel and vexation.— The mind of man is not always satisfied with the reasonable assurance of its own enjoyments, but will look forwards, and if it discovers some imaginary void, the want of some beloved object to fill his place after him, will often disquiet itself in vain, and say,——“ For whom do I labour, and bereave myself of rest ?”

This bar to his happiness God had likewise taken away, in blessing him with a numerous offspring of sons and daughters, the apparent inheritors of all his present happiness.—Pleasing reflection! to think the blessings God has indulged one's self in, shall be handed and continued down to a man's own seed ; how little does this differ from a second enjoyment of them, to an affectionate parent, who naturally looks forwards with as strong an interest upon his children, as if he was to live over again in his own posterity.

What could be wanting to finish such a picture of a happy man ?——Surely nothing, except a virtuous disposition to give a relish to these blessings, and direct him to make a proper use of them.—He had that too, for he was a *perfect and upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil.*

In the midst of all this prosperity, which was as great as could well fall to the share of one man;—whilst all the world looked gay, and smiled upon him, and every thing round him seemed to promise, if possible, an increase of happiness, in one instant all is changed into sorrow and utter despair.

—It pleases God for wise purposes to blast the fortunes of his house, and cut off the hopes of his posterity, and in one mournful day, to bring this great prince from his palace down to the dunghill. His flocks and herds, in which consisted the abundance of his wealth, were part consumed by a fire from Heaven, the remainder taken away by the sword of the enemy: his sons and daughters, whom it is natural to imagine so good a man had so brought up in a sense of their duty, as to give him all reasonable hopes of much joy and pleasure in their future lives;—natural prospect for a parent to look forwards at, to recompence him for the many cares and anxieties which their infancy had cost him! these dear pledges of his future happiness were all, all snatched from him at one blow, just at the time that one might imagine they were beginning to be the comfort and delight of his old age, which most wanted such staves to lean on;—and as circumstances add to an evil, so they did to this;—for it fell out not only by a very calamitous accident, which was grievous enough in itself, but likewise upon the back of his other misfortunes, when he was ill prepared to bear such a shock; and what would still add to it, it happened at an hour when he

had least reason to expect it, when he would naturally think his children secure and out of the way of danger. *For whilst they were feasting and making merry in their eldest brother's house, a great wind out of the wilderness smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon them.*

Such a concurrence of misfortunes are not the common lot of many: and yet there are instances of some who have undergone as severe trials, and bravely struggled under them; perhaps by natural force of spirits, the advantages of health, and the cordial assistance of a friend. And with these helps, what may not a man sustain?—But this was not Job's case; for scarce had these evils fallen upon him, when he was not only borne down with a grievous distemper which afflicted him from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, but likewise his three friends, in whose kind consolations he might have found a medicine,—even the wife of his bosom, whose duty it was with a gentle hand to have softened all his sorrows, instead of doing this, they cruelly insulted and became the reproachers of his integrity. O God! what is man when thou thus bruise him, and makest his burthen heavier as his strength grows less?—Who, that had found himself thus an example of the many changes and chances of this mortal life;—when he considered himself now stripped and left destitute of so many valuable blessings which the moment before thy providence had poured upon his head;—when he reflected upon this gay delightful structure, in appearance so strongly built, so pleasingly

surrounded with every thing that could flatter his hopes and wishes, and beheld it all levelled with the ground in one moment, and the whole prospect vanish with it like the description of an enchantment;—who, I say, that had seen and felt the shock of so sudden a revolution, would not have been furnished with just and beautiful reflections upon the occasion, and said with Job in the words of the text, *that man that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of misery,—that he cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not?*

The words of the text are an epitome of the natural and moral vanity of man, and contain two distinct declarations concerning his state and condition in each respect.

First, That he is a creature of few days; and secondly, that those days are full of Trouble.

I shall make some reflections upon each of these in their order, and conclude with a practical lesson from the whole.

And first, That he is of few days. The comparison which Job makes use of, *that man cometh forth like a flower*, is extremely beautiful, and more to the purpose than the most elaborate proof, which in truth the subject will not easily admit of;—the Shortness of Life being a point so generally complained of in all ages since the flood, and so universally felt and acknowledged by the whole species, as to require no evidence beyond a similitude; the intent of which is not so much to prove the fact, as to illustrate and place it in such a light as to

strike us, and bring the impression home to ourselves in a more affecting manner.

Man comes forth, says Job, like a flower, and is cut down;—he is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of God's works—fashioned after the image of his Creator with respect to reason and the great faculties of the mind; he cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field; as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so does he the animal world in the glory and excellencies of his nature.

The one—if no untimely accident oppress it, soon arrives at the full period of its perfection,—is suffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayest stage of its being:—or if it happens to escape the hands of violence, in a few days it necessarily sickens of itself and dies away.

Man likewise, though his progress is slower, and his duration something longer, yet the periods of his growth and declension are nearly the same both in the nature and manner of them.

If he escapes the dangers which threaten his tenderer years, he is soon got into the full maturity and strength of life; and if he is so fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then by accidents, by his own folly or intemperance—if he escapes these, he naturally decays of himself;—a period comes fast upon him, beyond which he was not made to last.—Like a flower or fruit which may be plucked up by force before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the period when they are to fade and drop.

drop of themselves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off, and no art of the botanist can uphold the one, or skill of the physician preserve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and constitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the several growths and decays of the vegetable race, so he seems as evidently to have prescribed the same laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the first rudiments of which, there are contained the specific powers of their growth, duration and extinction; and when the evolutions of those animal powers are exhausted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preserved beyond its bloom drops and perishes upon the stalk.

Thus much for this comparison of Job's, which though it is very poetical, yet conveys a just idea of the thing referred to.—*That he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not*—is no less a faithful and fine representation of the Shortness and vanity of human Life, of which one cannot give a better explanation, than by referring to the original, from whence the picture was taken.—With how quick a succession, do days, months and years pass over our heads?—How truly like a shadow that departeth do they flee away insensibly, and scarce leave an impression with us?—When we endeavour to call them back by reflection, and consider in what manner they have gone, how unable are the best of us to give a tolerable account?

count?—and were it not for some of the more remarkable stages which have distinguished a few periods of this rapid progress—we should look back upon it all as Nebuchadnezzar did upon his dream when he awoke in the morning;—he was sensible many things had passed, and troubled him too; but had passed on so quickly, they had left no footsteps behind, by which he could be enabled to trace them back.

—Melancholy Account of the Life of man! which generally runs on in such a manner, as scarce to allow time to make reflections which way it has gone.

How many of our first years slide by, in the innocent sports of childhood, in which we are not able to make reflection upon them?—How many more thoughtless years escape us in our youth, when we are unwilling to do it, and are so eager in the pursuit of pleasure as to have no time to spare, to stop and consider them?

When graver and riper years come on, and we begin to think it time to reform and set up for men of sense and conduct, then the business and perplexing interests of this world, and the endless plotting and contriving how to make the most of it, do so wholly employ us, that we are too busy to waste reflections upon so unprofitable a subject. —As families and children increase, so do our affections, and with them are multiplied our cares and toils for their preservation and establishment;—all which take up our thoughts so closely, and possess them so long, that we are often overtaken by grey hairs before we see them, or have found
leisure

leisure to consider how far we were got,—what we have been doing,—and for what purpose God sent us into the world. As man may justly be said to be of *few days* considered with respect to this hasty succession of things, which soon carries him into the decline of his Life, so may he likewise be said to *flee like a shadow and continue not*, when his duration is compared with other parts of God's works, and even the works of his own hands, which outlast him many generations;—whilst his—as Homer observes, like leaves, one generation drops, and another springs up to fall again and be forgotten.

But when we further consider his days in the light in which we ought chiefly to view them, as they appear in thy sight, O God! with whom a thousand years are but as yesterday; when we reflect that this hand-breadth of Life is all that is measured out to us from that eternity for which he is created, how does his short span vanish to nothing in the comparison? 'Tis true, the greatest portion of time will do the same when compared with what is to come; and therefore so short and transitory a one, as three-score years and ten, beyond which all is declared to be labour and sorrow, may the easier be allowed: and yet how uncertain are we of that portion short as it is? Do not ten thousand accidents break off the slender thread of human Life, long before it can be drawn out to that extent?—The new-born babe falls down an easy prey, and moulders back again into dust, like a tender blossom put forth in an untimely hour.—

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The hopeful youth in the very pride and beauty of Life is cut off, some cruel distemper or unthought of accident lays him prostrate upon the earth, to pursue Job's comparison, like a blooming flower smit and shrivelled up with a malignant blast.——In this stage of Life chances multiply upon us,——the seeds of disorders are sown by intemperance or neglect,——infectious distempers are more easily contracted, when contracted they rage with greater violence, and the success in many cases is more doubtful, insomuch that they who have exercised themselves in computations of this kind tell us, “that one half of the whole species which are born into the world, go out of it again, and are all dead in so short a space as the first seventeen years.”

These reflections may be sufficient to illustrate the first part of Job's declaration, that *man is of few days*. Let us examine the truth of the other, and see, whether he is not likewise *full of trouble*.

And here we must not take our account from the flattering outside of things, which are generally set off with a glittering appearance enough, especially in what is called, *higher Life*.——Nor can we safely trust the evidence of some of the more merry and thoughtless among us, who are so set upon the enjoyment of Life as seldom to reflect upon the Troubles of it;—or who, perhaps, because they are not yet come to this portion of their inheritance, imagine it is not their common lot.——Nor lastly, are we to form an idea of it, from the delusive stories of
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a few of the more prosperous passengers, who have fortunately sailed through and escaped the rougher toils and distresses. But we are to take our account from a close survey of human Life, and the real face of things, stript of every thing that can palliate or gild it over. We must hear the general complaint of all ages, and read the histories of mankind. If we look into them, and examine them to the bottom, what do they contain but the history of sad and uncomfortable passages, which a good-natured man cannot read but with oppression of spirits.—Consider the dreadful succession of wars in one part or other of the earth, perpetuated from one century to another with so little intermission, that mankind have scarce had time to breathe from them, since ambition first came into the world; consider the horrid effects of them in all those barbarous devastations we read of, where whole nations have been put to the sword, or have been driven out to nakedness and famine to make room for new comers.—Consider how great a part of our species in all ages down to this, have been trod under the feet of cruel and capricious tyrants, who would neither hear their cries, nor pity their distresses.—Consider slavery—what it is,—how bitter a draught, and how many millions have been made to drink of it;—which if it can poison all earthly happiness when exercised barely upon our bodies, what must it be, when it comprehends both the slavery of body and mind?—To conceive this, look into the history of the Romish church and her tyrants, (or rather executioners) who seem

seem to have taken pleasure in the pangs and convulsions of their fellow-creatures.—Examine the inquisition, hear the melancholy notes sounded in every cell.—Consider the anguish of mock-trials, and the exquisite tortures consequent thereupon, mercilessly inflicted upon the unfortunate, where the racked and weary soul has so often wished to take its leave,——but cruelly not suffered to depart.—Consider how many of these helpless wretches have been haled from thence in all periods of this tyrannic usurpation, to undergo the massacres and flames to which a false and a bloody religion has condemned them.

If this sad history and detail of the more public causes of the miseries of man are not sufficient, let us behold him in another light with respect to the more private causes of them, and see whether he is not full of trouble likewise there, and almost born to it as naturally as the sparks fly upwards. If we consider man as a creature full of wants and necessities (whether real or imaginary) which he is not able to supply of himself, what a train of disappointments, vexations and dependencies are to be seen, issuing from thence to perplex and make his being uneasy?—How many justlings and hard struggles do we undergo, in making our way in the world?—How barbarously held back?—How often and basely overthrown, in aiming only at getting bread?—How many of us never attain it—at least not comfortably,——but from various unknown causes——eat it all their lives long in bitterness?

If

If we shift the scene, and look upwards, towards those whose situation in Life seems to place them above the sorrows of this kind, yet where are they exempt from others? Do not all ranks and conditions of men meet with sad accidents and numberless calamities in other respects, which often make them go heavily all their lives long?

How many fall into chronical infirmities, which render both their days and nights restless and insupportable?—How many of the highest rank are tore up with ambition, or soured with disappointments, and how many more from a thousand secret causes of disquiet pine away in silence, and owe their deaths to sorrow and dejection of heart?—If we cast our eyes upon the lowest class and condition of Life,—the scene is more melancholy still.—Millions of our fellow-creatures, born to no inheritance but poverty and Trouble, forced by the necessity of their lots to drudgery and painful employments, and hard set with that too, to get enough to keep themselves and families alive.—So that upon the whole, when we have examined the true state and condition of human Life, and have made some allowances for a few fugacious, deceitful pleasures, there is scarce any thing to be found which contradicts Job's description of it.—Which ever way we look abroad, we see some legible characters of what God first denounced against us, *that in sorrow we should eat our bread, till we returned to the ground, from whence we were taken* *.

* N. B. Most of these reflections upon the miseries of Life, are taken from Woollasson.

But

But some one will say, Why are we thus to be put out of love with human Life? To what purpose is it to expose the dark sides of it to us, or enlarge upon the infirmities which are natural, and consequently out of our power to redress?

I answer, that the subject is nevertheless of great importance, since it is necessary every creature should understand his present state and condition, to put him in mind of behaving suitably to it.—Does not an impartial survey of man—the holding up this glass to shew him his defects and natural infirmities, naturally tend to cure his pride and cloath him with humility, which is a dress that best becomes a short-lived and a wretched creature?—Does not the consideration of the Shortness of our Life, convince us of the wisdom of dedicating so small a portion to the great purposes of eternity?

Lastly, When we reflect that this span of Life, short as it is, is chequered with so many Troubles, that there is nothing in this world springs up, or can be enjoyed without a mixture of sorrow, how insensibly does it incline us to turn our eyes and affections from so gloomy a prospect, and fix them upon that happier country, where afflictions cannot follow us, and where God will wipe away all tears from off our faces for ever and ever? Amen.

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S E R M O N XV.

Concerning the Education of Children.

By Archbishop TILLOTSON.

PROV. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

I HAVE on purpose chosen this text for the subject of a preparatory discourse in order to the reviving of that so shamefully neglected, and yet most useful and necessary duty of catechizing Children and young persons: but I shall extend it to the consideration of the Education of Children in general, as a matter of the greatest consequence both to religion and the public welfare.

For we who are ministers of God ought not only to instruct those who are committed to our charge in the common duties of Christianity, such as belong to all Christians, but likewise in

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all the particular duties which the several relations in which they stand to one another do respectively require and call for from them.

And amongst all these I know none that is of greater concernment to religion and to the good order of the world, than the careful Education of Children. And there is hardly any thing that is more difficult, and which requires a more prudent and constant application of our best care and endeavour.

It is a known saying of Melancthon that there are three things which are extremely difficult, *parturire, docere, regere*; "to bear and bring forth Children, to instruct and bring them up to be men, and to govern them when they arrive at man's estate." The instruction and good Education of Children is none of the least difficult of these. For to do it to the best advantage does not only require great sagacity to discern their particular disposition and temper, but great discretion to deal with them and manage them, and likewise continual care and diligent attendance to form them by degrees to religion and virtue.

It requires great wisdom and industry to advance a considerable estate, much art and contrivance and pains to raise a great and regular building: but the greatest and noblest work in the world, and an effect of the greatest prudence and care, is to rear and build up a man, and to form and fashion him to piety, and justice, and temperance, and all kind of honest and worthy actions. Now the foundations of this great work are to be carefully laid in the tender
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years of Children, that it may rise and grow up with them; according to the advice of the wise man here in the text, *Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

In which words are contained these two things:

First, the duty of parents and instructors of Children, *Train up a child, &c.* By childhood here I understand the age of persons from their birth, but more especially from their first capacity of instruction, till they arrive at the state and age which next succeeds childhood, and which we call youth; and which is the proper season for confirmation. For when Children have been well catechized and instructed in religion, then is the fittest time for them to take upon themselves and in their own persons to confirm that solemn vow which by their sureties they made at their baptism.

Train up a child in the way he should go, that is, in the course of life that he ought to lead; instruct him carefully in the knowledge and practice of his whole duty to God and men, which he ought to observe and perform all the days of his life.

Secondly, here is the consequent fruit and benefit of good education: *and when he is old he will not depart from it.* This we are to understand according to the moral probability of things: not as if this happy effect did always and infallibly follow upon the good Education of a child, but that this very frequently is, and may probably be presumed and hoped to be the

fruit and effect of a pious and prudent Education. Solomon means, that from the very nature of the thing this is the most hopeful and likely way to train up a child to be a good man. For as Aristotle truly observes, "Moral sayings and proverbial speeches are to be understood only ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ, that is, to be usually and for the most part true." And though there may be several exceptions made, and instances given to the contrary, yet this doth not infringe the general truth of them: but if in frequent and common experience they be found true, this is all the truth that is expected in them, because it is all that was intended by them.

And of this nature is this aphorism or proverb of Solomon in the text; and so likewise are most of the wise sayings of this book of the Proverbs, as also of Ecclesiastes: and we do greatly mistake the design and meaning of them whenever we go about to exact them to a more strict and rigorous truth, and shall upon due consideration find it impossible to bring them to it.

So that the true meaning of the text may be fully comprised in the following proposition.

"That the careful, and prudent, and religious Education of Children hath for the most part a very good influence upon the whole course of their lives."

In the handling of this argument I design, by God's assistance, to reduce my discourse to these five heads.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good

good Education of Children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it.

II. I shall give some more particular directions for the management of this work in such a way as may be most effectual for its end.

III. I shall take notice of some of the common and more remarkable miscarriages in the performance of this duty.

IV. I shall endeavour to make out the truth of this proposition, by shewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage, and to have so powerful and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

V. and lastly ; I shall, by the most powerful arguments I can offer, endeavour to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

I. I shall shew more generally wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, and severally consider the principal parts of it. And under this head I shall comprehend promiscuously the duty of parents, and, in case of their death, of guardians ; and of godfathers and godmothers ; though this for the most part signifies very little more than a pious and charitable care and concernment for them, because the Children for whom they are sureties are seldom under their power : and the duty likewise of those who are the teachers and instructors of them : and the duty also of masters of families towards servants in their childhood and younger years : and lastly, the duty of ministers under whose parochial care and inspection Children are as members of the families committed to their

charge: I say, under this head I shall comprehend the duties of these respectively, according to the several obligations which lie upon each of them in their several relations to them. And I shall reduce them to these eight particulars, as the principal parts wherein the Education of Children doth consist.

First, in the tender and careful nursing of them.

Secondly, in bringing them to be baptized and admitted members of Christ's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members.

Thirdly, in a due care to inform and instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God and their neighbour.

Fourthly, and more especially in a prudent and diligent care to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue.

Fifthly, in giving them good example.

Sixthly, in wise restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable reproof and correction.

Seventhly, in bringing them to be publicly catechized by the minister in order to confirmation.

Eighthly, in bringing them to the bishop to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which by their sureties they entered into at their baptism.

First, In the tender and careful nursing of Children. I mention this first, because it is the first and most natural duty incumbent upon parents towards their Children: and this is particularly the duty of mothers. This affection and

tenderness, nature, which is our surest guide and director, hath implanted in all living creatures towards their young ones: and there cannot be a greater reproach to creatures that are endued with reason, than to neglect a duty to which nature directs even the brute creatures by a blind and unthinking instinct. So that it is such a duty as cannot be neglected without a downright affront to nature, and from which nothing can excuse but disability, or sickness, or the evident danger of the mother, or the interposition of the father's authority, or some very extraordinary and publick necessity.

This I foresee will seem a very hard saying to nice and delicate mothers, who prefer their own ease and pleasure to the fruit of their own bodies: but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, I think myself obliged to deal plainly in this matter, and to be so faithful as to tell them that this is a natural duty; and because it is so, of a more necessary and indispensable obligation than any positive precept of revealed religion; and that the general neglect of it is one of the great and crying sins of this age and nation; and, which, as much as any sin whatsoever, is evidently a punishment to itself in the palpable ill effects and consequences of it: which I shall, as briefly as I can, endeavour to represent; that if it be possible, we may in the first point of Education, so fundamental and necessary to the happiness both of parents and Children, and consequently to the public good of human society, be brought to comply with the unerring instinct of nature,

and with the plain dictate of the common reason of mankind, and the general practice of all ages and nations.

De 1. The neglect of this duty is a sort of exposing of Children; especially when it is not done, as very often it is not, with more than ordinary care and choice. It always exposeth them to manifest inconvenience, and sometimes to great danger; even to that degree as in the consequence of it is little better than the laying a child in the streets, and leaving it to the care and compassion of a parish. There are two very visible inconveniencies which do commonly attend it.

(1.) Strange milk, which is very often disagreeable to the child, and with which the child to be sure sucks in the natural infirmities of the nurse, together with a great deal of her natural inclinations and irregular passions, which many times stick by the child for a long time after: and which is worse than all this, it sometimes happens that some secret disease of the nurse is conveyed to the child.

(2.) A shameful and dangerous neglect of the child, especially by such nurses as make a trade of it; of whom there are great numbers in and about this great city: who, after they have made their first and main advantage of the child by the excessive, not to say extravagant vails, which usually here in England, above all other places in the world, are given at christnings: and then by the strait allowances which are commonly made afterwards for the nursing and keeping of the child, are often
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tempted, not to say worse, to a great neglect of the child; which if it happen to die for want of due care, sets the nurse at liberty to make a new advantage by taking another child.

Nor can it well be otherwise expected than that a nurse, who by this course is first made to be unnatural to her own child, should have no great care and tenderness for a child which is not her own.

I have heard a very sad observation made by those who have had the opportunity to know it, that in several of the towns and villages about London, where this trade of nursing Children is chiefly driven, hardly one in five of these children lives out the year: and this surely is a danger which natural affection as well as duty does oblige parents to take all possible care to prevent.

2. This course doth most certainly tend very much to the estranging and weakning of natural affection on both sides: I mean both on the part of the mother and of the child. The pains of nursing as well as of bearing Children do insensibly create a strange tenderness of affection and care in the mother. *Can a woman, says God, Isa. xlix. 15. forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* Can a woman? that is, a mother, not a nurse; for the sucking child is said to be the son of her womb. God speaks of this as a thing next to impossible.

And this likewise is a great endearment of the mother to the child: which endearment, when the child is put out, is transferred from
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the mother to the nurse, and many times continues to be so for a great many years after; yea, and often to that degree as if the nurse were the true mother, and the true mother a mere stranger. So that by this means natural affection must be extremely weakened; which is great pity, because when it is kept up in its full strength it often proves one of the best securities of the duty of a child.

But because this severe doctrine will go down but very hardly with a great many, I must take the more care to guard against the objections which will be made to it. Those from natural disability, or sickness; from evident and apparent danger of the mother, or from the interposition of the father's authority, or from plain necessity; or if there be any other that have an equal reason with these, I have prevented already by allowing them to be just and reasonable exceptions from the general rule, when they are real, and not made pretences to shake off our duty.

But there are besides these, two objections which indeed are real, but yet seem to have too great a weight with those who would fain decline this duty, and are by no means sufficient to excuse mothers, no not those of the highest rank and quality, from the natural obligation of it. And they are these: the manifest trouble, and the manifold restraints which the careful discharge of this duty does unavoidably bring upon those who submit themselves to it.

(1.) For the trouble of it, I have only this to say, and I think that no more need to be

said about it ; that no body is discharged from any duty by reason of the trouble which necessarily attends it, and is inseparable from it ; since God who made it a duty foresaw the trouble of it when he made it so.

(2.) As to the manifest restraints which it lays upon mothers ; this will best be answered by considering of what nature these restraints are. And they are chiefly in these and the like instances. This duty restrains mothers from spending their morning and their money in curious and costly dressing ; from mispending the rest of the day in formal and for the most part impertinent visits, and in seeing and hearing plays, many of which are neither fit to be seen or heard by modest persons and those who pretend to religion and virtue ; as I hope all Christians do, especially persons of higher rank and quality : and it restrains them likewise from trifling away a great part of the night in gaming, and in revelling till past midnight, I am loth to say how much.

These are those terrible restraints which this natural duty, of mothers nursing their Children, lays upon them. Now I cannot but think all these to be very happy restraints : happy surely for the child ; and in many respects happy for the father, and for the whole family, which by this means will be kept in much better order : but happiest of all for the mother, who does herein not only discharge a great and necessary duty, but is hereby also hindered from running into many great faults, which before they will
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be forgiven must cost her a deep contrition, and a very bitter repentance.

Perhaps I may have gone farther in this unusual argument, than will please the present age: but I hope posterity will be so wise as to consider it and lay it to heart. For I am greatly afraid that the world will never be much better till this great fault be mended. I proceed to the next particular wherein the good Education of Children doth consist, namely,

Secondly, In bringing them to be baptized and admitted members of Christ's church, at the times appointed or accustomed in the national church of which the parents are members. I mean, to bring them to the church to be there publicly initiated, and solemnly admitted by baptism. And this the rules of the church of England do strictly enjoin, unless the child be in danger of death; and in that case only it is allowed to administer baptism privately, and in a summary way without performing the whole office: but then if the child live, it is ordered that it shall be brought to the church, where the remainder of the office is to be solemnly performed.

I know that of late years, since our unhappy confusions, this sacrament hath very frequently been administered in private: and ministers have been in a manner, and to avoid the greater mischief of separation, necessitated to comply with the obstinacy of the greater and more powerful of their parishioners; who for their ease, or humour, or for the convenience of a pompous christning, will either have their Children baptized

tized at home by their minister; or if he refuse, will get some other minister to do it; which is very irregular.

Now I would intreat such persons calmly to consider how contrary to reason, and to the plain design of the institution of this sacrament, this perverse custom, and their obstinate resolution in it, is. For is there any civil society or corporation into which persons are admitted without some kind of solemnity? And is the privilege of being admitted members of the Christian church, and heirs of the great and glorious promises and blessings of the new covenant of the Gospel, less considerable, and fit to be conferred with less solemnity? I speak to Christians; and they who are so in good earnest will, without my using more words about it, consider what I say in this particular.

Thirdly, Another and very necessary part of the good Education of Children is, by degrees to inform and carefully to instruct them in the whole compass of their duty to God, their neighbour, and themselves: that so they may be taught how to behave themselves in all the steps of their life, from their first capacity of reason till they arrive at the more perfect use and exercise of that faculty; when, if at first they be well instructed, they will be better able to direct and govern themselves afterwards.

This duty God does expressly and very particularly charge upon his own peculiar people, the people of Israel, speaking of the laws which he had given them: *Thou shalt*, says he, Deut. vi. 7. *teach them diligently unto thy Children, and shalt*

shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way; when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And this God long before promised, that Abraham, the father of the faithful, would do; I know Abraham, says he, Gen. xviii. 19. that he will command his Children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.

This work ought to be begun very early, upon the first budding and appearance of reason and understanding in Children. So the prophet directs, Isa. xxviii. 9, 10. Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts: for precept must be upon precept, &c.

To this end we must, by such degrees as they are capable, bring them acquainted with God and themselves. And in the first place we must inform them, that there is such a Being as God, whom we ought to honour and reverence above all things. And then, that we are all his creatures, and the work of his hands, that it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: that he continually preserves us, and gives us all the good things that we enjoy: and therefore we ought to aske every thing of him by prayer, because this is an acknowledgment of our dependence upon him; and to return thanks to him for all that we have and hope for, because this is a just and easy tribute, and all that we can render to him for his numberless favours and benefits.

And

And after this, they are to be instructed more particularly in their duty to God and men, as I shall shew more fully afterwards. And because fear and hope are the two passions which do chiefly sway and govern human nature, and the main springs and principles of action; therefore Children are to be carefully informed that there is a life after death, wherein men shall receive from God a mighty and eternal reward, or a terrible and endless punishment, according as they have done or neglected their duty in this life: that God will love and reward those who do his will and keep his commandments, but will execute a dreadful punishment upon the workers of iniquity and the wilful transgressors of his laws.

And, according as they are capable, they are to be made sensible of the great degeneracy and corruption of human nature, derived to us from the fall and wilful transgression of our first parents; and of the way of our recovery out of this miserable estate by Jesus Christ; whom God hath sent in our nature to purchase and accomplish the redemption and salvation of mankind, from the captivity of sin and Satan, and from the damnation of hell.

Fourthly, The good Education of Children consists not only in informing their minds in the knowledge of God and their duty, but more especially in endeavouring with the greatest care and prudence to form their lives and manners to religion and virtue. And this must be done by training them up to the exercise of the following graces and virtues.

1. To

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1. To obedience and modesty; to diligence and sincerity; and to tenderness and pity, as the general dispositions to religion and virtue.

2. To the good government of their passions, and of their tongue; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying as a base and vile quality; these being as it were the foundation of religion and virtue.

3. To piety and devotion towards God; to sobriety and chastity with regard to themselves; and to justice and charity towards all men; as the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue.

I. As the general dispositions to religion and virtue, we must train them up,

(1.) To obedience. Parents must take great care to maintain their authority over their Children; otherwise they will neither regard their commands, nor hearken to and follow their instructions. If they once get head and grow stubborn and disobedient, there is very little hope of doing any great good upon them.

(2.) To modesty, which is a fear of shame and disgrace. This disposition, which is proper to Children, is a marvellous advantage to all good purposes. "They are modest," says Aristotle, who are afraid to offend, and they are afraid to offend who are most apt to do it; as Children are, because they are very much under the power of their passions, without a proportionable strength of reason to govern them and keep them under.

Now modesty is not properly a virtue, but it is a very good sign of a tractable and towardly dispo-

disposition, and a great preservative and security against sin and vice : and those Children, who are much under the restraint of modesty, we look upon as most hopeful and likely to prove good ; whereas immodesty is a vicious temper broke loose and got free from all restraint : so that there is nothing left to keep an impudent person from sin, when fear of shame is gone : for sin will take possession of that person whom shame hath left. He that is once become shameless hath prostituted himself. Therefore preserve this disposition in Children as much as is possible, as one of the best means to preserve their innocency and to bring them to goodness.

(3.) To diligence, *sine quâ vir magnus nunquam extitit* ; “ without which, says one, there “ never was any great and excellent person.” When the Roman historians describe an extraordinary man, this always enters into his character as an essential part of it, that he was *incredibili industriâ, diligentia singulari*, “ of incredible industry, of singular diligence ;” or something to that purpose. And indeed a person can never be excellently good, nor extremely bad, without this quality. The devil himself could not be so bad and mischievous as he is, if he were not so stirring and restless a spirit, and did not compass the earth, and go to and fro seeking whom he may devour.

This is part of the character of Sylla, and Marius, and Catiline, those great disturbers of the Roman state ; as well as of Cesar and Pompey, who were much greater and better men, but yet gave trouble enough to their country, and at last dis-

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solved the Roman commonwealth by their ambition and contention for superiority : this, I say, enters into all their characters, that they were of a vigorous and indefatigable spirit. So that diligence in itself is neither a virtue nor a vice, but may be applied either way, to good or bad purposes ; and yet where all other requisites do concur it is a very proper instrument and disposition for virtue.

Therefore train up Children to diligence, if ever you desire they should excel in any kind. *The diligent hand, saith Solomon, Prov. x. 4. maketh rich ; rich in estate, rich in knowledge. Seest thou a man diligent in his business ? as the same wise man observes, Prov. xxii. 29. he shall stand before princes, he shall not stand before mean or obscure men. And again, the hand of the diligent shall bear rule, but the slothful shall be under tribute. Prov. xii. 24.* Diligence puts almost every thing into our power, and will in time make Children capable of the best and greatest things.

Whereas idleness is the bane and ruin of Children ; it is the unbending of their spirits, the rust of their faculties, and as it were the laying of their minds fallow ; not as husbandmen do their lands that they may get new heart and strength, but to impair and lose that which they have. Children that are bred up in laziness are almost necessarily bad, because they cannot take the pains to be good ; and they cannot take pains, because they have never been inured and accustomed to it ; which makes their spirits restive, and when you have occasion

sion to quicken them and spur them up to business, they will stand stock still.

Therefore never let your Children be without a calling, or without some useful, or at least innocent employment that will take them up; that they may not be put upon a kind of necessity of being vicious for want of something better to do. The Devil tempts the active and vigorous into his service, knowing what fit and proper instruments they are to do his drudgery: but the slothful and idle, no body having hired them and set them on work, lie in his way, and he stumbles upon them as he goes about; and they do as it were offer themselves to his service, and having nothing to do they even tempt the devil himself to tempt them, and to take them in his way:

(4.) To sincerity; which is not so properly a single virtue, as the life and soul of all other graces and virtues; and without which, what shew of goodness soever a man may make, he is unsound and rotten at the heart. Cherish therefore this disposition in Children, as that which when they come to be men will be the great security and ornament of their lives, and will render them acceptable both to God and men.

(5.) To tenderness and pity; which, when they come to engage in business and to have dealings in the world, will be a good bar against injustice and oppression; and will be continually prompting us to charity, and will fetch powerful arguments for it from our own bowels.

To preserve this goodness and tenderness of nature, this so very humane and useful affection, keep Children, as much as possible, out of the way of bloody fights and spectacles of cruelty; and discountenance in them all cruel and barbarous usage of creatures under their power; do not allow them to torture and kill them for their sport or pleasure; because this will insensibly and by degrees harden their hearts, and make them less apt to compassionate the wants of the poor and the sufferings and afflictions of the miserable.

2. As the main foundation of religion and virtue, Children must be carefully trained up to the government of their passions, and of their tongues; and particularly to speak truth, and to hate lying as a base and vile quality.

(1.) To the good government of their passions. It is the disorder of these, more especially of desire, and fear, and anger, which betrays us to many evils. Anger prompts men to contention and murder: inordinate desire, to covetousness and fraud and oppression: and fear many times awes men into sin, and deters them from their duty.

Now if these passions be cherished, or even but let alone in Children, they will in a short time grow headstrong and unruly, and when they come to be men will corrupt the judgment, and turn good-nature into humour, and the understanding into prejudice, and wilfulness: but if they be carefully observed and prudently restrained, they may by degrees be managed and brought under government; and the inordinacy
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of them being pruned away, they may prove excellent instruments of virtue.

Therefore be careful to discountenance in Children any thing that looks like rage and furious anger, and to shew them the unreasonableness and deformity of it. Check their longing desires after things pleasant, and use them to frequent disappointments in that kind; that when you think fit to gratify them they may take it for a favour, and not challenge every thing they have a mind to as their due; and by degrees may learn to submit to the more prudent choice of their parents, as being much better able to judge what is good and fit for them.

And when you see them at any time apt out of fear to neglect their duty, or to fall into any sin, or to be tempted by telling a lye to commit one fault to hide and excuse another, which Children are very apt to do; the best remedy of this evil will be to plant a greater fear against a less, and to tell them what and whom they should chiefly fear; *not him who can hurt and kill the body, but him who after he hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell.*

The neglect of Children in this matter, I mean in not teaching them to govern their passions, is the true cause why many that have proved sincere Christians when they came to be men, have yet been very imperfect in their conversation, and their lives been full of inequalities and breaches, which have not only been matter of great trouble and disquiet to themselves, but of great scandal to religion; when

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their light which should shine before men is so often darkened and obscured by these frequent and visible infirmities.

(2.) To the government of their tongues. To this end teach Children silence, especially in the presence of their betters. And as soon as they are capable of such a lesson, let them be taught not to speak but upon consideration, both of what they say, and before whom. And above all, inculcate upon them that most necessary duty and virtue of speaking truth, as one of the best and strongest bands of human society and commerce: and possess them with the baseness and vileness of telling a lye; for if it be so great a provocation to give a man the lye, then surely to be guilty of that fault must be a mighty reproach.

They who write of Japan tell us that those people, though mere heathens, take such an effectual course in the Education of their Children, as to render a lye, and breach of faith, above all things odious to them: insomuch that it is a very rare thing for any person among them to be taken in a lye, or found guilty of breach of faith. And cannot the rules of Christianity be rendered as effectual to restrain men from these faults which are scandalous even to nature, and much more so to the Christian religion?

To the government of the tongue does likewise belong the restraining of Children from lewd and obscene words, from vain and profane talk; and especially from horrid oaths and imprecations: from all which they are easily kept

kept at first, but if they are once accustomed to them, it will be found no such easy matter for them to get quit of these evil habits. It will require great attention and watchfulness over themselves, to keep oaths out of their common discourse: but if they be heated and in passion, they throw out oaths and curses as naturally as men that are highly provoked sling stones, or any thing that comes next to hand at one another: so dangerous a thing is it to let any thing that is bad in Children to grow up into a habit.

3. As the principal and essential parts of religion and virtue, let Children be carefully bred up,

(1.) To sobriety and temperance in regard to themselves; under which I comprehend likewise purity and chastity. The government of the sensual appetite as to all kind of bodily pleasures is not only a great part of religion, but an excellent instrument of it, and a necessary foundation of piety and justice. For he that cannot govern himself is not like to discharge his duty either to God or men. And therefore St. Paul puts sobriety first, as the primary and principal virtue in which men are instructed by the Christian religion, and which must be laid as the foundation both of piety towards God, and of righteousness to men. *The grace of God, for so he calls the Gospel, that brings salvation unto all men, hath appeared; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world.* It first teacheth us to live soberly: and

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unless we train up Children to this virtue, we must never expect that they will live righteously or godly in this present world.

Especially, Children must be bred up to great sobriety and temperance in their diet, which will retrench the fuel of other inordinate appetites. It is a good saying I have met with somewhere, *Magna pars virtutis est bene moratus venter*, "a well-manner'd and well-govern'd" appetite, in matter of meats and drinks, is a "great part of virtue." I do not mean, that Children should be brought up according to the rules of a Lessian diet, which sets an equal stint to all stomachs, and is as senseless a thing as a law would be which should enjoin that shoes for all mankind should be made upon one and the same last.

(2.) To a serious and unaffected piety and devotion towards God, still and quiet, real and substantial, without much shew and noise; and as free, as may be, from all tricks of superstition, or freaks of enthusiasm; which, if parents and teachers be not very prudent, will almost unavoidably insinuate themselves into the religion of Children; and when they are grown up will make them appear, to wise and sober persons, fantastical and conceited; and render them very apt to impose their own foolish superstitions and wild conceits upon others, who understand religion much better than themselves.

Let them be taught to honour and love God above all things, to serve him in private, and to attend constantly upon his publick worship;
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and to keep their minds intent upon the several parts of it, without wandring and distraction : to pray to God as the fountain of all grace and *the giver of every good and perfect gift* : and to acknowledge him, and to render thanks to him, as our most gracious and constant benefactor, and the great patron and preserver of our lives : to be careful to do what he commands, and to avoid what he hath forbidden : to be always under a lively sense and apprehension of his pure and all-seeing eye, which beholds us in secret : and to do every thing in obedience to the authority of that great *lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy* ; and with an awful regard to the strict and impartial *judgment of the great day*.

(3.) To justice and honesty : to defraud and oppress no man ; to be as good as their word, and to perform all their promises and contracts ; and endeavour to imprint upon their minds the equity of that great rule, which is so natural and so easy, that even Children are capable of it ; I mean that rule which our blessed Saviour tell us, *is the law and the prophets*, namely, that we should do to others as we would have others do to us if we were in their case and circumstances, and they in ours.

You that are parents and have to do in this world, ought to be just and equal in all your dealings. In the first place, for the sake of your own souls, and next for the sake of your Children ; not only that you may entail no curse upon the estate you leave them, but likewise that you may teach them no injustice by the example

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example you set before them ; which in this particular they will be as apt to imitate as in any one thing ; because of the present worldly advantage which it seems to bring, and because justice is in truth a manly virtue and least understood by Children ; and therefore injustice is a vice which they will soonest practise and with the least reluctancy, because they have the least knowledge of it in many particular cases : and because they have so little sense of this great virtue, they should not be allowed to cheat, no not in play and sport, even when they play for little or nothing : for if they practise in that case, and be unjust in a little, they will be much more tempted to be so when they can gain a great deal by it.

I remember that Xenophon in his institution of Cyrus, which he designed for the idea of a well-educated prince, tells us this little but very instructive story concerning young Cyrus : that his governor, the better to make him to understand the nature of justice, puts this case to him : You see there, says he to Cyrus, two boys playing, of different stature ; the lesser of them hath a very long coat, and the bigger a very short one : now, says he, if you were a judge how would you dispose of these two garments ? Cyrus immediately, and with very good reason as he thought, passeth this sudden sentence, that the taller boy should have the longer garment, and he that was of lower stature the shorter, because this certainly was the fittest for them both : upon which his governor sharply rebukes him to this purpose ; telling him, that
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if he were to make two coats for them he said well; but he did not put this case to him as a tailor but as a judge, and as such he had given a very wrong sentence: for a judge, says he, ought not to consider what is most fit, but what is just; not who could make the best use of a thing, but who hath the most right to it.

This I bring partly to shew in what familiar ways the principles of virtue may be instilled into children; but chiefly to prove that justice is a manly virtue, and that there is nothing wherein Children may be more easily mislead, than in matter of right and wrong: therefore Children should be taught the general principles and rules of justice and righteousness, because if we would teach them to do justice we must teach them to know what justice is. For many are unjust merely out of ignorance and for want of knowing better, and cannot help it.

(4.) To charity; I mean chiefly to the poor and destitute; because this, as it is an essential so it is a most substantial part of religion. Now to encourage this disposition in Children we must not only give them the example of it, but must frequently inculcate upon them such passages of Scripture as these, *that pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction: that as we sow in this kind, so we shall reap: that he shall have judgment without mercy who hath shewed no mercy: that at the judgment of the great day we shall in*
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a very particular manner be called to an account for the practice or omission of this duty, and shall then be absolved or condemned according as we have exercised or neglected this great virtue of the Christian religion.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVI.

Concerning the Education of Children.

By Archbishop TILLOTSON.

P A R T II.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Fifthly. **T**HE good Education of Children consists in giving them good example. This course David took in his family, as appears by that solemn resolution of his, Psal. ci. 2. *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way, I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.* Let parents and masters of families give good example to their Children and servants, in a constant serving of God in their families, which will nourish religion in those that are under

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under their care: and let them also be exemplary in a sober and holy conversation before those that belong to them.

And let not your Children, as far as is possible, have any bad examples to converse with, either among your servants, or their own companions; lest *by walking with them they learn their way and get a blot to their souls.* There is contagion in example, and nothing doth more slyly insinuate itself and gain upon us than a living and familiar pattern; therefore, as much as in you lies, let Children always have good examples before them.

Especially, let parents themselves be exemplary to them in the best things, because their example is of all other the most powerful, and carries greatest authority with it. And without this, instruction will signify very little, and the great force and efficacy of it will be lost. We shall find it very hard to persuade our Children to do that which they see we do not practise ourselves. For even Children have so much sense and sagacity as to understand that actions are more real than words, and a more certain indication of what a man doth truly and inwardly believe. Example is the most lively way of teaching, and because Children are much given to imitation, it is likewise a very delightful way of instruction, and that of which Children are most capable; both because it is best understood, and apt to make the deepest impression upon them.

So that parents, above all others, have one argument to be religious and good themselves,

for the sake of their Children. If you desire to have them good, the best way to make them so is to give them the example of it in being good yourselves. For this reason parents should take great care to do nothing but what is worthy of imitation. Your Children will follow you in what you do, therefore do not go before them in any thing that is evil. The evil example of parents is both a temptation and encouragement to Children to sin, because it is a kind of authority for what they do, and looks like a justification of their wickedness.

With what reason canst thou expect that thy Children should follow thy good instructions, when thou thyself givest them an ill example? Thou dost but as it were beckon to them with thy head, and shew them the way to Heaven by thy good counsel, but thou takest them by the hand and ledest them in the way to hell by thy contrary example. Whenever you swear or tell a lye, or are passionate and furious, or come drunk into your family, you weaken the authority of your commands, and lose all reverence and obedience to them by contradicting your own precepts.

The precepts of a good man are apt to raise and inflame others to the imitation of them, but when they come from one who is faulty and vicious in that kind himself, they are languid and faint, and give us no heart and encouragement to the exercise of those virtues, which we plainly see they do not practise themselves. It is the apostle's argument, *Thou therefore that*
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teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that teachest thy Children to speak truth, dost thou tell a lye? Thou that sayest they must not swear, dost thou profane the name of God by customary oaths and curses? Thou art unfit to be *a guide of the blind, a light to them that sit in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, and a teacher of babes; because thou thyself hast only a form of knowledge and of truth in the law,* but art destitute of the life and practice of it. In a word, if you be not careful to give good example to your Children, you defeat your own counsels and undermine the best instructions you can give them; and they will all be spilt like water upon the barren sands, they will have no effect, they will bring forth no fruit.

Sixthly, Good Education consists in wise and early restraints from that which is evil, by seasonable reproof and correction. And this also is one way of instruction: so Solomon tells us, Prov. xxix. 15. *the rod and reproof giveth wisdom:* and though both these do suppose a fault that is past, yet the great end of them is to prevent the like for the future, and to be an admonition to them for the time to come. And therefore whatever will probably be effectual for future caution and amendment, ought to be sufficient in this kind, because the end is always to give measure to the means: and where a mild and gentle rebuke will do the business, reproof may stop there without proceeding farther; or when that will not do, if a sharp word and a severe admonition will be effectual, the rod may be spared.

Provided always, that your lenity give no encouragement to sin, and be so managed that Children may perceive that you are in good earnest, and resolved that if they will not reform they shall certainly be punished. And provided likewise, that your lenity bear a due proportion to the nature and quality of the fault. We must not use mildness in the case of a wilful and heinous sin, especially if it be exemplary and of public influence. To rebuke gently upon such an occasion is rather to countenance the fault, and seems to argue that we are not sensible enough of the enormity of it, and that we have not a due dislike and detestation for it: such cold reproofs as those which old Eli gave his sons, 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24. *Why do you such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people*, that is, their carriage was such as gave publick scandal: *nay, my sons; for it is not a good report that I hear, you make the Lord's people to transgress.*

Such a cold reproof as this, where the crime was so great and notorious, was a kind of allowance of it, and a partaking with them in their sin; and so God interprets it, and therefore calls it, chap. ii. 19. *a kicking at his sacrifice, and a despising of his offering*: and he threatens Eli with most terrible judgments upon this very account, *because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

So that our severity must be proportioned to the crime. Where the fault is great, there greater severity must be used; so much at least as may be an effectual restraint for the future.

Here was Eli's miscarriage, that in the case of so great a fault as his sons were guilty of, his proceeding was neither proportioned to the crime, nor to the end of reproof and correction, which is amendment for the future: but he used such a mildness in his reproof of them, as was more apt to encourage than restrain them in their vile courses: for so the text says, *that his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.*

There are indeed some dispositions so very tender and tractable, that a gentle reproof will suffice. But most Children are of that temper that correction must be sometimes used, and a fond indulgence in this case is many times their utter ruin and undoing; and in truth not love but hatred. So the wise man tells, Prov. xiii. 24. *He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.* Chap. xix. 18. *Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.* And again, chap. xxii. 15. *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.* Chap. xxiii. 13, 14. *Withhold not correction from the child, for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die: thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* Again, chap. xxix. 15. *The rod and reproof giveth wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame:* he mentions the mother emphatically, because she many times is most faulty in this fond indulgence; and therefore the shame and grief of it doth justly fall upon her.

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So that correction is of great use, and often necessary; and parents that forbear it, are not only cruel to their Children, but to themselves: for God many times punishes those parents very severely who have neglected this necessary piece of discipline. There is hardly to be found in the whole Bible a more terrible temporal threatning than that concerning Eli and his house, for his fond indulgence to his sons, who when they came to be men proved such horrible scandals not only to their father, but to the priest's office; and to that degree as *to make the sacrifices of the Lord to be abhorred by all the people.* I will recite the threatning at large, for an admonition to parents that they be not guilty in this kind. 1 Sam. iii. 11, 12, 13, 14. *The Lord said to Samuel, Behold I will do a thing in Israel at which both the ears of every one that beareth it shall tingle: in that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not: and therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.* I know very well that this enormous wickedness of Eli's sons was committed by them after they were grown to be men; but this instance is nevertheless to my present purpose, there being hardly any doubt to be made but that it was the natural effect of a remiss and too indulgent an Education.

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Yea very often God doth correct and remarkably punish fond parents by those very Children who have wanted due reproof and correction: of which the Scripture give us a remarkable instance in Adonijah, upon the mention of whose rebellion against David his father, the text takes particular notice of his father's extreme fondness of him, as both the procuring and meritorious cause of it; *for his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?* And on the contrary, the wise Son of Sirach tells us, *that he that chastiseth his son shall have joy of him.*

Seventhly, The next thing I shall mention as a part of good Education is, the bringing of Children to be publickly catechized by the minister, to prepare them for solemn confirmation.

It was with a particular respect to this work of publick catechizing, and by way of introduction to it, that I at first proposed to treat thus largely of the good Education of Children, hoping it might be of good use to handle this subject more fully than it hath usually been done, at least to my knowledge, from the pulpit.

And therefore I shall say something, and that very briefly, concerning the nature, and concerning the necessity and great usefulness of catechizing Children.

1. For the nature of it, it is a particular way of teaching by question and answer, accommodated and fitted for the instruction of Children in the principles of religion. I do not indeed find, that this particular method is any where
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injoined in Scripture; but instruction in general is: and I doubt not but that upon this general warrant parents and ministers may use that way of instruction of Children which is most fit and proper to instil into them the principles of religion. It is true, that the word *κατηχεῖν*, from whence our word catechism doth come, is used in Scripture to signify teaching in general: but it hath since by ecclesiastical writers been appropriated to that particular way of instruction which hath been long in use in the Christian church, and is commonly called catechizing.

2. As to the necessity and great usefulness of it; catechizing hath a particular advantage as to Children: because they are subject to forgetfulness and want of attention. Now catechizing is a good remedy against both these; because by questions put to them Children are forced to take notice of what is taught, and must give some answer to the question that is asked: and a catechism being short, and containing in a little compass the most necessary principles of religion, it is the more easily remembered.

The great usefulness and indeed the necessity of it plainly appears by experience. For it very seldom happens, that Children which have not been catechized have any clear and competent knowledge of the principles of religion; and for want of this are incapable of receiving any great benefit by sermons, which suppose persons to be in some measure instructed beforehand in the main principles of religion.

Besides, that if they have no principles of religion fixed in them, they become an easy prey to seducers. And we have had sad experience of this in our age; and among many other dismal effects of our late civil confusions this is none of the least, that publick catechizing was almost wholly disused, and private too in most families: for had catechizing of Children been continued, it is very probable that this age would have been infested with fewer errors and with fewer schisms; and that there would not have been so much apostacy from the fundamentals of religion. For it is, I think, a true observation, that catechizing, and the history of the martyrs, have been the two great pillars of the protestant religion.

There being then so great a necessity and usefulness of this way of instruction, I would earnestly recommend the practice of it to parents and masters of families with respect to their Children and servants. For I do not think that this work should lie wholly upon ministers. You must do your part at home, who by your constant residence in your families have better and more easy opportunities of inculcating the principles of religion upon your Children and servants. There you must prepare them for publick catechizing, that the work of the minister may not be too heavy upon him.

As to the part which concerns ministers, I intend, by God's assistance, so soon as the business can be put into a good method, to begin this exercise. And I do earnestly intreat all that have young Children and servants, to bring such

such of them as are fit to be publickly catechized and instructed in the principles of religion: and I shall as often as shall be thought expedient spend some time in this work, between afternoon prayers and sermon.

The catechism to be used shall be that appointed in our liturgy, which is short, and contains in it the chief principles of the Christian religion. And I shall make a short and plain explication of the heads of it; suitable to the capacity of Children. And because this may not probably be of great advantage to those who are of riper years and understandings, yet because Children are to be instructed as well as men, I must intreat those who are like to carry away the least profit, to bring with them the more patience: especially since I shall for their sakes, in the constant course of my afternoon's sermons, more largely and fully explain the chief principles of the Christian belief: a work which you know I have some time ago entred upon.

Eighthly. The last thing I shall mention, and with which the state of childhood ends, is bringing of Children to the bishop, to be solemnly confirmed, by their taking upon themselves the vow which by their sureties they entred into at their baptism.

This is acknowledged by almost all sects and parties of Christians to be of primitive antiquity, and of very great use when it is performed with that due preparation of persons for it, by the ministers to whose charge they belong, and

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with that seriousness and solemnity which the nature of the thing doth require.

And to that end it were very desirable that confirmations should be more frequent, and in smaller numbers at a time; that so the bishop may apply himself more particularly to every person that is to be confirmed, that by this means the thing may make the deeper impression, and lay the stronger obligation upon them.

One thing more I could wish, both to prevent confusion, and for the ease also of the bishop, that his work may not be endless, that ministers would take care that none may present themselves to the bishop, or be presented by the ministers, to be confirmed a second time: because a great many are wont to offer themselves every time there is a confirmation, which is both very disorderly and unreasonable, there being every whit as little reason for a second confirmation, as there is for a second baptism: and if any persons need so often to be confirmed, it is a sign that confirmation hath very little effect upon them.

II. I proceed to the second general head, which was to give some more particular directions for the management of this work of the good Education of Children in such a way as may be most effectual to its end.

First, endeavour, as well as you can, to discover the particular temper and disposition of Children, that you may suit and apply yourselves to it, and by striking in with nature may steer and govern them in the sweetest and easiest way. This is like knowledge of the na-

ture of the ground to be planted, which husbandmen are wont very carefully to enquire into, that they may apply the seed to the soil, and plant in it that which is most proper for it:

*Quid quæque ferat regio, quid quæque recuset,
Hic segetes, illic veniunt felicius uvæ.*

Every soil is not proper for all sorts of grain or fruit: one ground is fit for corn, another for vines. And so it is in the tempers and dispositions of Children: some are more capable of one excellency and virtue than another, and some more strongly inclined to one vice than another: which is a great secret of nature and providence, and it is very hard to give a just and satisfactory account of it.

It is good therefore to know the particular tempers of Children, that we may accordingly apply our care to them, and manage them to the best advantage: that where we discern in them any forward inclinations to good, we may cast in such seeds and principles, as, by their suitableness to their particular tempers, we judge most likely to take soonest and deepest root: and when these are grown up, and have taken possession of the soil, they will prepare it for the seeds of other virtues.

And so likewise when we discover in their nature a more particular disposition and leaning towards any thing which is bad, we must with great diligence and care apply such instructions, and plant such principles in them, as may be most effectual to alter this evil disposition of their minds ;

minds; that whilst nature is tender and flexible we may gently bend it the other way: and it is almost incredible what strange things by prudence and patience may be done towards the rectifying of a very perverse and crooked disposition.

So that it is of very great use to observe and discover the particular tempers of Children, that in all our instruction and management of them we may apply ourselves to their nature and hit their peculiar disposition: by this means we may lead and draw them to their duty in humane ways, and such as are much more agreeable to their temper than constraint and necessity, which are harsh and churlish, and against the grain. Whatever is done with delight goes on chearfully, but when nature is compelled and forced, things proceed heavily: therefore, when we are forming and fashioning Children to religion and virtue, we should make all the advantage we can of their particular tempers. This will be a good direction and help to us to conduct nature in the way it will most easily go. Every temper gives some particular advantage and handle whereby we may take hold of them and steer them more easily: but if we take a contrary course, we must expect to meet with great difficulty and reluctance.

Such ways of Education as are prudently fitted to the particular dispositions of Children are like wind and tide together, which will make the work go on amain: but those ways and methods which are applied cross to nature,

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are like wind against tide, which make a great stir and conflict, but a very slow progress. Not that I do, or can expect that all parents should be philosophers, but that they should use the best wisdom they have in a matter of so great concernment.

Secondly, in your instruction of Children endeavour to plant in them those principles of religion and virtue which are most substantial, and are like to have the best influence upon the future government of their lives, and to be of continual and lasting use to them. Look to the seed you sow, that it be sound and good, and for the benefit and use of mankind: this is to be regarded, as well as the ground into which the seed is cast.

Labour to beget in Children a right apprehension of those things which are most fundamental and necessary to the knowledge of God and our duty; and to make them sensible of the great evil and danger of sin; and to work in them a firm belief of the next life, and of the eternal rewards and recompences of it. And if these principles once take root they will spread far and wide, and have a vast influence upon all their actions; and unless some powerful lust, or temptation to vice hurry them away, they will probably accompany them and stick by them as long as they live.

Many parents, according to their best knowledge and apprehensions of religion in which they themselves have been educated, and too often according to their zeal without knowledge, do take care to plant little and ill-ground-
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ed opinions in the minds of their Children, and so fashion them to a party by infusing into them the particular notions and phrases of a sect, which when they come to be examined have no substance, nor perhaps sense in them : and by this means, instead of bringing them up in the true and solid principles of Christianity, they take a great deal of pains to instruct them in some doubtful doctrines of no great moment in religion, and perhaps false at the bottom ; whereby instead of teaching them to hate sin, they fix them in schism, and teach them to hate and damn all those who differ from them and are opposite to them ; who yet are perhaps much more in the right, and far better Christians than themselves.

And indeed nothing is more common and more to be pitied, than to see with what a confident contempt and scornful pity some ill instructed and ignorant people will lament the blindness and ignorance of those who have a thousand times more true knowledge and skill than themselves, not only in all other things, but even in the practice as well as knowledge of the Christian religion : believing those who do not relish their affected phrases and uncouth forms of speech to be ignorant of the mystery of the Gospel, and utter strangers to the life and power of godliness.

But now what is the effect of this mistaken way of Education ? The harvest is just answerable to the husbandry,

Infelix lolium & steriles dominantur avenæ ;

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As they have sown, so they must expect to reap; and instead of good grain to have cockles and tares: *they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*, as the expression is in the prophet; instead of true religion, and of a sober and peaceable conversation, there will come up new and wild opinions, a factious and uncharitable spirit, a furious and boisterous zeal, which will neither suffer themselves to be quiet, nor any body that is about them.

But if you desire to reap the effects of true piety and religion, you must take care to plant in Children the main and substantial principles of Christianity, which may give them a general bias to holiness and goodness, and not to little particular opinions, which being once fixed in them by the strong prejudice of Education, will hardly ever be rooted out.

Thirdly, do all that in you lies to check and discourage in them the first beginnings of sin and vice: so soon as ever they appear pluck them up by the roots. This is like the weeding of corn, which is a necessary piece of good husbandry. Vices like ill weeds grow apace, and if they once take to the soil it will be hard to extirpate and kill them: but if we watch them and cut them up as soon as they appear, this will discourage the root and make it die.

Therefore take great heed that your Children be not habituated and accustomed to any evil course. A vice that is of any considerable growth and continuance will soon grow obstinate, and having once spread its root, it will be a very difficult matter to clear the ground of it.

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A child may be so long neglected till he be overgrown with vice to that degree, that it may be out of the power of parents ever to bring him to good fruit. If it once gain upon the depraved disposition of Children, it will be one of the hardest things in the world to give a stop to it. It is the apostle's caution *to take heed of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*, which they who go on in an evil course will most certainly be. We should observe the first appearances of evil in Children, and kill those young serpents as soon as they stir lest they bite them to death.

Fourthly, bring them, as soon as they are capable of it, to the publick worship of God, where he hath promised his more especial presence and blessing. It is in Zion, the place of God's publick worship, where *the Lord hath commanded the blessing, even life for evermore*: There are the means which God hath appointed for the begetting and increasing of grace in us: this is the pool where the angel useth to come and to move the waters: bring your Children hither, where if they diligently attend they may meet with an opportunity of being healed.

And when they come from the church, call them frequently to an account of what they have heard and learned there: this will make them both to attend more diligently to what they hear, and to lay it up in their memories with greater care, and will fix it there so as to make a deeper and more lasting impression upon their minds.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, be careful more especially to put them upon the exercise and practice of religion and virtue in such instances as their understanding and age are capable of. Teach them some short and proper forms of prayer to God, to be said by them devoutly upon their knees in private, at least every morning and evening. A great many Children neglect this, not from any ill disposition of mind, but because no body takes care to teach them how to do it. And if they were taught and put upon doing it, the habit and custom of any thing will after a little while make that easy and delightful enough, which they cannot afterwards be brought to without great difficulty and reluctance.

Knowledge and practice do mutually promote and help forward one another. Knowledge prepares and disposeth for practice, and practice is the best way to perfect knowledge in any kind. Mere speculation is a very raw and rude thing in comparison of that true and distinct knowledge which is gotten by practice and experience. The most exact skill in geography is nothing compared with the knowledge of that man, who besides the speculative part hath travelled over and carefully viewed the countries he hath read of. The most knowing man in the art and rules of navigation is no body in comparison of an experienced pilot and seaman. Because knowledge perfected by practice is as much different from mere speculation, as the skill of doing a thing is from being told how a thing is to be done. For men may easily mistake rules, but frequent practice

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and experience are seldom deceived. Give me a man that constantly does a thing well, and that shall satisfy me that he knows how to do it. That saying of our blessed Saviour, *If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself*, is a clear determination of this matter, namely, that they understand the will of God best who are most careful to do it. And so likewise the best way to know what God is, is to transcribe his perfections in our lives and actions; to be holy, and just, and good, and merciful as he is.

Therefore when the minds of Children are once thoroughly possess'd with the true principles of religion, we should bend all our endeavours to put them upon the practice of what they know: let them rather be taught to do well than to talk well; rather to avoid what is evil, in all its shapes and appearances, and to practise their duty in the several instances of it, than to *speak with the tongues of men and angels: unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* Job xxviii. 28. Hereby, saith St. John, *we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments: he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,* 1 John ii. 3, 4.

Xenophon tells us, that the Persians instead of making their Children learned taught them to be virtuous; and instead of filling their heads with fine speculations, taught them honesty, and sincerity, and resolution; and endeavoured to

to make them wise and valiant, just and temperate. Lycurgus also in the institution of the Lacedemonian commonwealth, took no care about learning, but only about the lives and manners of their Children: though I should think that the care of both is best, and that learning would very much help to form the manners of Children, and to make them both wiser and better men: and therefore with the leave of so great and wise a lawgiver, I cannot but think that this was a defect in his institution: because learning, if it be under the conduct of true wisdom and goodness, is not only an ornament, but a great advantage to the better government of any kingdom or commonwealth.

Sixthly, there must be great care and diligence used in this whole business of Education, and more particularly in the instruction of Children. There must be *line upon line, and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little*, as the prophet expresseth it. Isa. xxviii. 10. The principles of religion and virtue must be instilled and dropt into them by such degrees and in such a measure as they are capable of receiving them: for Children are narrow-mouth'd vessels, and a great deal cannot be poured into them at once.

And they must also be accustomed to the practice and exercise of religion and goodness, by degrees, till holiness and virtue have taken root, and they be well settled and confirmed in a good course. Now this requires constant at-

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tendance and even patience of the husbandman to wait for the fruit of our labours.

In some Children the seeds that are sown fall into a greater depth of earth, and therefore are of a slow disclosure, and it may be a considerable time before they appear above ground; it is long before they shoot and grow up to any height, and yet they may afterwards be very considerable: "which," as an ingenious author * observes, "should excite the care and prevent the despair of parents: for if their Children be not such speedy spreaders and branches as the vine, they may perhaps prove
 " — *proles tardè crescentis olivæ.*"

It is a work of great pains and difficulty to rectify a perverse disposition. It is more easy to palliate the corruption of nature, but the cure of it requires time and careful looking to. An evil temper and inclination may be covered and concealed, but it is a great work to conquer and subdue it. It must first be checked and stopped in its course, and then weakened and the force of it be broken by degrees, and at last, if it be possible, destroyed and rooted out.

Seventhly and lastly, to all these means we must add our constant and earnest prayers to God for our Children, that his grace may take an early possession of them; that he would give them virtuous inclinations and towardly dispositions for goodness: and that he would be pleased to accompany all our endeavours to that end with his powerful assistance and blessing;

* Sir H. W.

without which, all that we can do will prove ineffectual. Parents may plant, and ministers may water, but it is God that must give the increase.

Be often then upon your knees for your Children. Do not only teach them to pray for themselves, but do you likewise with great fervour and earnestness commend them to God and to the power of his grace, which alone is able to sanctify them. Apply yourselves to the father of lights; from whom comes every good and perfect gift: beg his holy Spirit, and ask divine knowledge and wisdom for them of him, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth no man: beseech him to season their tender years with his fear, which is the beginning of wisdom: pray for them as Abraham did for Ishmael, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight.*

Many parents, having found all their endeavours for a long time together ineffectual, have at length betook themselves to prayer, earnest and importunate prayer to God, as their last refuge. Monica, the mother of St. Austin, by the constancy and importunity of her prayers obtained of God the conversion of her son, who proved afterwards so great and glorious an instrument of good to the church of God: according to what St. Ambrose bishop of Milan, to encourage her to persevere in her fervent prayers for her son, had said to her, *Fieri non potest ut filius tot lachrymarum pereat*: "It cannot be, says he, that a son of so many prayers and tears should miscarry." God's grace is free, but it is not unlikely but that God will

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at last give in this blessing to our earnest prayers and faithful endeavours.

Therefore pray for them *without ceasing, pray and faint not.* Great importunity in prayer seldom fails of a gracious answer: our blessed Saviour spake two parables on purpose to encourage us herein: not because God is moved, much less because he is tired out with our importunity; but because it is an argument of our firm belief and confidence in his great goodness; *and to them that believe, all things are possible,* says our blessed Lord: To whom, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVII.

Concerning the Education of Children.

By Archbishop TILLOTSON.

P A R T III.

P R O V. xxii. 6.

*Train up a child in the way he should go, and
when he is old he will not depart from it.*

I PROCEED to the next general head which
I propos'd, namely,

III. To discover some of the more remarkable and common miscarriages in the management of this work. I do not hereby mean gross neglects for want of care, but mistakes and miscarriages for want of prudence and skill, even when there is no want of care and diligence in parents and instructors. And I shall for method's sake reduce the more considerable and common miscarriages to these three heads.

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First, In matter of instruction.

Secondly, In matter of example.

Thirdly, In matter of reproof and correction.

First, In matter of instruction. Parents do very often mainly miscarry in not teaching their Children the true difference between good and evil, and the degrees of them; as when we teach them any thing is a sin that really is not, or that any thing is not a sin which in truth is so: or when we teach them to lay more stress and weight upon things than they will bear; making that which perhaps is only convenient to be in the highest degree necessary, or that which it may be is only convenient, or may be an occasional scandal to some weak Christians, to be a sin in its own nature damnable.

Parents do likewise lay too great a weight upon things, when they are as diligent to instruct them in lesser things, and as strict in injoining them, and as severe in punishing the commission or neglect of them, according as they esteem them good or evil, as if they were the weightier things of the law, and matters of the greatest moment in religion.

Thus I have known very careful and well-meaning parents that have with great severity restrained their Children in the wearing of their hair: nay I can remember since the wearing of it below their ears was looked upon as a sin of the first magnitude; and when ministers generally, whatever their text was, did in every sermon either find or make an occasion with great severity to reprove the great sin of long hair;

hair; and if they saw any one in the congregation guilty in that kind, they would point him out particularly, and let fly at him with great zeal.

I have likewise known some parents that have strictly forbidden their Children the use of some sorts of recreations and games under the notion of heinous sins, upon a mistake, that because there was in them a mixture of fortune and skill they were therefore unlawful; a reason which I think hath no weight and force in it, though I do not deny but human laws may for very prudent reasons either restrain or forbid the use of these games, because of the boundless expence both of money and time which is many times occasioned by them.

I have known others, nay perhaps the same persons, that would not only allow but even encourage their Children to despise the very service of God under some forms, which according to their several apprehensions they esteemed to be superstitious or factious. But this I have ever thought to be a thing of most dangerous consequence, and have often observed it to end either in the neglect or contempt of all religion.

And how many parents teach their Children doubtful opinions, and lay great stress upon them as if they were saving or damning points; and hereby set such an edge and keenness upon them for or against some indifferent modes and circumstances of God's worship as if the very being of a church and the essence of religion were concerned in them?

These certainly are great mistakes, and many times have very pernicious effects, thus to confound things which are of so wide and vast a difference as good and evil, lawful and unlawful, indifferent and necessary. For when Children come to be men, and to have a freer and larger view of the world, and shall find by the contrary practice of very wise and serious persons that they have quite different apprehensions of these matters, and do not think that to be a sin which their parents have so strictly forbidden them under that notion, and many times punished them more severely for the doing of it than if they had told a lye, this may make them apt to question whether any thing be a sin: and the violences which they offer to their consciences, and the strain that they give them upon such an occasion, by complying with the general practice of others contrary to the principles of their Education, doth many times open a gap for great and real sins.

Besides, that Children which are bred up in high prejudices for or against indifferent opinions or practices in religion, do usually when they are grown up prove to be men of narrow and contracted spirits, peevish and froward and uncharitable, and many times great bigots and zealots either in the ways of superstition or faction, according to the principles which have been instilled into them to bias them either way. And very hardly do they ever quit themselves so clearly of their prejudices, as to become wise and peaceable and substantial Christians.

In short, if we carefully observe it, we shall find that when Children have been thus indiscreetly educated, their religion differs as much from that of sober and judicious Christians as the civil behaviour and conversation of those who have been unskilfully and conceitedly taught how to carry themselves, does from the behaviour of those who have had a more free and generous Education.

Secondly, In matter of example. There are many parents whose lives are exemplary in the main, who yet seem to use too great a freedom before their Children. It is an old rule, and I think a very good one:

Maxima debetur pueris reverentia.

“ There is a very great reverence due to Children.” There are many things which are not sins, and therefore may lawfully be done, which yet it may not be prudent and expedient to do before all persons. There are some words and actions so trivial and light, that they are not fit to be said or done before those for whom we have a reverence. There is a certain freedom of conversation which is only proper among equals in age and quality, which if we use before our superiors and betters, we seem to contemn them; if before our inferiors, they will go nigh to contemn us.

It ought to be considered, that Children do not understand the exact limits of good and evil, so that if in our words or actions we go to the utmost bounds of that which is lawful, we shall be in danger of shewing them the way to that
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which is unlawful. Children are not wont to be careful of their steps, and therefore we will not venture them to play about a precipice, or near a dangerous place, where yet men that will take care may go safely enough. And therefore parents should be very careful to keep their Children from the confines of evil, and at as great a distance from it as they can. And to this end their words and actions should be ever tempered with gravity and circumspection, that Children may not see or hear any thing which may acquaint them with the approaches to sin, or carry them to the borders of vice; lest they should not stop just there, but take a step further than you intended they should go.

Thirdly, In matter of reproof and correction: many religious and careful parents are guilty of two great miscarriages in this part of Education.

1. Of too great rigor and severity; which, especially with some sort of tempers, hath very ill success. The first experiment that should be made upon Children should be to allure them to their duty, and by reasonable inducements to gain them to the love of goodness; by praise and reward, and sometimes by shame and disgrace: and if this will do, there will be no occasion to proceed to severity; especially not to great severities, which are very unsuitable to human nature. A mixture of prudent and seasonable reproof or correction when there is occasion for it, may do very well; but whips are not the cords of a man: human nature may be

be driven by them, but it must be led by sweeter and gentler ways.

Speusippus caused the pictures of joy and gladness to be set round about his school, to signify that the business of Education ought to be rendered as pleasant as may be: and indeed Children stand in need of all the enticements and encouragements to learning and goodness. *Metus baud diuturni magister officii*, says Tully; "Fear alone will not teach a man his duty and hold him to it for a long time:" for when that is removed, nature will break loose and do like itself: besides, that frequent corrections make punishments to lose their awe and force, and are apt to spoil the disposition of Children, and to harden them against shame; and after a while they will despise correction when they find they can endure it.

Great severities do often work an effect quite contrary to that which was intended. And many times those who were bred up in a very severe school, hate learning ever after for the sake of the cruelty that was used to force it upon them: and so likewise an endeavour to bring Children to piety and goodness by unreasonable strictness and rigor does often beget in them a lasting disgust and prejudice against religion, and teaches them as Erasmus says, *virtutem simul odisse & nōsse*, "to hate virtue at the same time that they teach them to know it:" for by this means virtue is represented to the minds of Children under a great disadvantage, and good and evil are brought too near together; so that whenever they think of religion

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ligion and virtue, they remember the severity which was wont to accompany the instructions about it; and the natural hatred which men have for punishment is by this means derived upon religion itself. And indeed how can it be expected that Children should love their duty, when they never hear of it but with a handful of rods shaken over them?

I insist upon this the more, because I do not remember to have observed more notorious instances of great miscarriage, than in the Children of very strict and severe parents; of which I can give no other account but this, that nature when it is thus overcharged recoils the more terribly: it hath something in it like the spring of an engine, which being forcibly pressed does upon the first liberty return back with so much the greater violence. In like manner the vicious dispositions of Children, when restrained merely by the severity of parents, do break forth strangely as soon as ever they get loose and from under their discipline.

2. Another miscarriage in this matter is when reproof and correction are accompanied and managed with passion. This is to betray one fault, and perhaps a greater, in the punishment of another. Besides, that this makes reproof and correction to look like revenge and hatred, which usually does not persuade and reform, but provoke and exasperate. And this probably may be one reason of the apostle's admonition, Eph. vi. 4. *parents, provoke not your Children unto wrath*, because that is never likely to have any good effect. Correction is a kind of phy-

physick, which ought never to be administred in passion, but upon counsel and good advice.

And that passion is incident to parents upon this occasion, the apostle tells us when he says, Heb. xii. 10. *that the parents of our flesh chasten us for their pleasure*, that is, they do it many times to gratify their passion; but God chastens us for our profit, not in anger but with a design to do us good; and can we have a better pattern than our heavenly Father to imitate?

A father is as it were a prince and a judge in his family: there he gives laws, and inflicts censures and punishments upon offenders. But how misbecoming a thing would it be to see a judge pass sentence upon a man in choler? It is the same thing to see a father in the heat and fury of his passion correct his child. If a father could but see himself in this mood, and how ill his passion becomes him, instead of being angry with his child he would be out of patience with himself. I proceed to the next thing I proposed, namely,

IV. To make out the truth of the proposition contained in the text, by shewing how the good Education of Children comes to be of so great advantage, and to have so good and lasting an influence upon their whole lives.

I confess there are some wild and savage natures, monstrous and prodigious tempers, hard as the rocks, and barren as the sand upon the sea-shore; which discover strong and early propensions to vice, and a violent antipathy to goodness. Such tempers are next to desperate, but yet they are not utterly intractable to the grace of God and the religious care of parents.

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I hope such tempers as these are very rare, though God is pleased they should sometimes appear in the world, as instances of the great corruption and degeneracy of human nature, and of the great need of divine grace. But surely there is no temper that is absolutely and irrecoverably prejudiced against that which is good. This would be so terrible an objection against the providence of God as would be very hard to be answered. God be thanked, most tempers are tractable to good Education, and there is very great probability of the good success of it, if it be carefully and wisely managed.

And for the confirmation of this truth, I shall instance in two very great advantages of a religious and virtuous Education of Children.

First, It gives religion and virtue the advantage of the first possession.

Secondly, The advantage of habit and custom.

First, Good Education gives religion and virtue the advantage of the first possession. The mind of man is an active principle, and will be employed about something or other. It cannot stand idle, and will therefore take up with that which first offers itself. So soon as reason puts forth itself, and the understanding begins to be exercised, the mind of man discovers a natural thirst after knowledge, and greedily drinks in that which comes first. If it have not the waters of life and the pure streams of goodness to allay that thirst, it will seek to quench it in the filthy puddles and impure pleasures of the world.

Now

Now since Children will be busying their minds about something, it is good that they should be entertained with the best things and with the best notions and principles of which their understanding and age are capable. It is a happy thing to be principled, and, as I may say, prejudiced the better way, and that religion should get the first possession of their hearts. For it is certainly a great advantage to religion to be planted in a tender and fresh soil. And if parents be careless, and neglect this advantage, the enemy will be sure to sow his tares while the husbandman is asleep.

Therefore we should prevent the devil by giving God and goodness an early possession of our Children, and by letting him into their hearts betimes. Possession is a great point, and it is of mighty consequence to have nature planted with good seeds before vicious inclinations spring up and grow into strength and habit.

I know that there is a spiteful proverb current in the world, and the devil hath taken care to spread it to the discouragement of an early piety, *A young saint and an old devil*: but notwithstanding this, a young saint is most likely to prove an old one. Solomon to be sure was of this mind, and I make no doubt but he made as wise and true proverbs as any body hath done since: him only excepted who was a much greater and wiser man than Solomon.

Secondly, Good Education gives likewise the advantage of habit and custom; and custom is of mighty force. It is, as Pliny in one of his epistles

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epistles says of it, *efficacissimus omnium rerum magister*, "the most powerful and effectual master in every kind." It is an acquired and a sort of second nature, and next to nature itself a principle of greatest power. Custom bears a huge sway in all human actions. Men love those things and do them with ease to which they have been long inured and accustomed. And on the contrary, men go against custom with great regret and uneasiness.

And among all others, that custom is most strong which is begun in childhood: and we see in experience the strange power of Education in forming persons to religion and virtue. Now Education is nothing but certain customs planted in childhood, and which have taken deep root whilst nature was tender.

We see likewise in common experience how dangerous an evil habit and custom is, and how hard to be altered. Therefore the Cretians, when they would curse a man to purpose, wished that the gods would engage him in some bad custom, looking upon a man after that to be irrecoverably lost. So on the other side, to be engaged in a good custom is an unspeakable advantage; especially for Children to be habituated to a holy and virtuous course, before the habits of sin and vice have taken root and are confirmed in them.

We are too naturally inclined to that which is evil: but yet this ought not discourage us, because it is certain in experience that a contrary custom hath done much in many cases, even where nature hath been strongly inclined the
other

other way. Demosthenes did by great resolution and almost infinite pains, and after a long habit, alter the natural imperfection of his speech, and in despite of nature became the most eloquent man perhaps that ever lived. And this amounts even to a demonstration, for what hath been done may be done.

So that it is not universally true which Aristotle says, "that nature cannot be altered." It is true indeed in the instance which he gives of throwing a stone upward; You cannot, says he, by any custom, nay though you fling it up never so often, teach a stone to ascend of itself: and so it is in many other instances in which nature is peremptory: but nature is not always so; but sometimes hath a great latitude: as we see in young trees, which though they naturally grow straight up, yet being gently bent may be made to grow any way. But above all, moral inclinations and habits do admit of great alteration, and are subject to the power of a contrary custom.

Indeed Children when they come to be men, should take great care, that they do not owe their religion only to custom; but they should upon consideration and due examination of the grounds of it, so far as they are capable of doing it, make it their choice. And yet for all that, we must not deny the best religion in the world this greatest advantage of all other. It is certainly a great happiness for children to be inclined to that which when they come to understand themselves they would make their choice, if they were indifferent; but an indif-

ferency cannot be preserved in Children : and therefore, since they will certainly be biased one way or other, there is all the reason in the world why we should endeavour to bias them the better way. Parents may often mistake about what is best, but if they love their Children they cannot but wish and endeavour that they may be good and do what is best.

I come now to the last head I proposed, which was

V. To endeavour by the most powerful arguments I can offer, to stir up and persuade those whose duty this is, to discharge it with great care and conscience.

If the foregoing discourse be true, what can be said to those who are guilty in the highest degree of the gross neglect of this great duty? who neither by instruction, nor example, nor restraint from evil, do endeavour to make their Children good. Some parents are such monsters, I had almost said devils, as not to know how to give good things to their Children; but *instead of bread give them a stone, instead of a fish give them a serpent, instead of an egg give them a scorpion*, as our Saviour expresseth it.

These are evil indeed, who train up their Children for ruin and destruction; in the service of the devil, and in the trade and mystery of iniquity: who, instead of teaching them the fear of the Lord, infuse into them the principles of atheism and irreligion, and profaneness: instead of teaching them to love and reverence religion, they teach them to hate and despise it, and to make a mock both of sin and holiness:

instead

instead of training them up in the knowledge of the holy Scriptures which are able to make men wise unto salvation, they do *ædificare ad gehennam*, "they edify them for hell," by teaching them to profane that holy book, and to abuse the word of God which they ought to tremble at, by turning it into jest and raillery: instead of teaching them to pray and to bless the name of God, they teach them to blaspheme that great and terrible name, and to profane it by their continual oaths and imprecations: and instead of bringing them to God's church, they carry them to the devil's chapels, to playhouses and places of debauchery, those schools and nurseries of lewdness and vice.

Thus they, who ought to be the great teachers and examples of holiness and virtue, are the chief encouragers and patterns of vice and wickedness in their Children: and instead of restraining them from evil, they countenance them in it, and check all forward inclinations to goodness; till at last they make them ten times more the Children of wrath, than they were by that corrupt nature which they derived from them; and hereby treasure up, both for their Children and themselves, *wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*.

But I hope there are few or none such here. They do not use to frequent God's house and worship. And therefore I shall apply myself to those who are not so notoriously guilty in this kind, tho' they are greatly faulty in neglecting the good Education of their Children. And for the greater

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conviction of such parents, I shall offer to them the following considerations.

First, Consider what a sad inheritance you have conveyed to your Children. You have transmitted to them corrupt and depraved natures, evil and vicious inclinations: you have begotten them in your own image and likeness, so that by nature they are Children of wrath. Now methinks parents that have a due sense of this should be very solicitous, by the best means they can use, to free them from that curse; by endeavouring to correct those perverse dispositions and cursed inclinations which they have transmitted to them. Surely you ought to do all you can to repair that broken estate which from you is descended upon them.

When a man hath by treason tainted his blood and forfeited his estate, with what grief and regret doth he look upon his Children; and think of the injury he hath done to them by his fault? and how solicitous is he, before he die, to petition the king for favour to his Children? How earnestly doth he charge his friends to be careful of them and kind to them? that by these means he may make the best reparation he can of their fortune which hath been ruined by his fault.

And have parents such a tenderness for their Children, in reference to their estate and condition in this world; and have they none for the good estate of their souls and their eternal condition in another world? If you are sensible that their blood is tainted, and that their best fortunes are ruined by your sad misfortunes; why

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do you not bestir yourselves for the repairing of God's image in them? Why do you not *travel in birth till Christ be formed in them*? Why do you not pray earnestly to God and give him no rest, who hath reprieved, and it may be pardoned you, that he would extend his grace to them also, and grant them the blessings of his new covenant?

All your Children are begotten of the bond-woman; therefore we shall pray as Abraham did, *O that Ishmael may live in thy sight*: O that these sons of Hagar may be heirs of a blessing.

Secondly, Consider in the next place, that good Education is the very best inheritance that you can leave to your Children. It is a wise saying of Solomon, *that wisdom is good with an inheritance*; Eccl. vii. 7. but surely an inheritance, without wisdom and virtue to manage it, is a very pernicious thing. And yet how many parents are there who omit no care and industry to get an estate that they may leave it to their Children, but use no means to form their minds and manners for the right use and enjoyment of it; without which it had been much happier for them to have been left in great poverty and straits?

Dost thou love thy child? this is true love to any one, to do the best for him we can. Of all our toil and labour for your Children, this may be all the fruit they may reap, and all that they may live to enjoy, the advantage of a good Education. All other things are uncertain. You may raise your Children to honour, and settle a noble estate upon them to support it.

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You may leave them, as you think, to faithful guardians, and by kindness and obligation procure them many friends: and when you have done all this, their guardians may prove unfaithful and treacherous, and in the changes and revolutions of the world their honours may slip from under them, and their *riches may take to themselves wings and fly away*: and when these are gone, and they come to be nipped with the frost of adversity, their friends will fall off like leaves in autumn. *This is a sore evil, which yet I have seen under the sun.*

But if the good Education of your Children hath made them wise and virtuous, you have provided an inheritance for them which is out of the reach of fortune, and cannot be taken from them. Crates the philosopher used to stand in the highest places of the city, and cry out to the inhabitants, "O ye people! Why do you toil to get estates for your Children, when you take no care for their Education?" This is, as Diogenes said, to take care of the shoe, but none of the foot that is to wear it; to take great pains for an estate for your Children, but none at all to teach them how to use it; that is, to take great care to undo them, but none to make them happy.

Thirdly, Consider that by a careful and religious Education of your Children you provide for your own comfort and happiness. However they happen to prove, you will have the comfort of a good conscience and of having done your duty. If they be good, they are matter of great comfort and joy to their parents. *A wise son,*

son, saith Solomon, *maketh a glad father.* It is a great satisfaction to see that which we have planted to thrive and grow up; to find the good effect of our care and industry, and that the work of our hands doth prosper. The son of Sirach, among several things for which he reckons a man happy, mentions this in the first place, *He that hath joy of his Children.* Eccles xxv. 7.

On the contrary, in wicked Children the honour of a family fails, our name withers, and in the next generation will be quite blotted out: whereas a hopeful posterity is a prospect of a kind of eternity. We cannot leave a better and more lasting monument of ourselves, than in wise and virtuous Children. Buildings and books are but dead things in comparison of these living memorials of ourselves.

By the good Education of your Children you provide for yourselves some of the best comforts both for this world and the other. For this world; and that at such a time when you most stand in need of comfort, I mean the time of sickness and old age. Wise men have been wont to lay up some *præsidia senectutis*, something to support them in that gloomy and melancholy time, as books, and friends, or the like. But there is no such external comfort at such a time as good and dutiful Children. They will then be the light of our eyes, and the cordial of our fainting spirits; and will recompense all our former care of them by their present care of us: and when we are decaying and withering away, we shall have the pleasure to

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See our youth as it were renewed, and ourselves flourishing again in our Children. The son of Sirach, speaking of the comfort which good father hath in a well educated son, *Though he die, says he, yet he is as if he were not dead, for he hath left one behind him that is like himself. While he lived he saw and rejoiced in him, and when he died he was not sorrowful.* Eccclus xxx, 4, 5.

Whereas on the contrary, *a foolish son is,* as Solomon tell us, *a heaviness to his mother,* the miscarriage of a child being apt most tenderly to affect the mother. Such parents as neglect their Children, do as it were provide so many pains and aches for themselves against they come to be old. And rebellious Children are to their infirm and aged parents so many aggravations of an evil day, so many burdens of their age: they help to bow them down, and to bring their gray hairs so much the sooner with sorrow to the grave. They do usually repay their parents all the neglect of their Education by their undutiful carriage towards them.

And good Children will likewise be an unspeakable comfort to us in the other world. When we come to appear before God at the day of judgment, to be able to say to him, *Lo! here am I and the Children which thou hast given me;* how will this comfort our hearts, and make us lift up our heads with joy in that day?

Fourthly, Consider that the surest foundation of the publick welfare and happiness is laid in the good Education of Children: families are increased by Children, and cities and nations are made

made up of families. And this is a matter of so great concernment both to religion and the civil happiness of a nation, that anciently the best constituted commonwealths did commit this care to the magistrate more than to parents.

When Antipater demanded of the Spartans fifty of their children for hostages, they offered rather to deliver to him twice as many men; so much did they value the loss of their country's education. But now amongst us this work lies chiefly upon parents. There are several ways of reforming men; by the laws of the civil magistrate, and by the publick preaching of ministers. But the most likely and hopeful reformation of the world must begin with Children. Wholsom laws and good sermons are but slow and late ways: the timely and the most compendious way is a good Education. This may be an effectual prevention of evil, whereas all after-ways are but remedies, which do always suppose some neglect and omission of timely care.

And because our laws leave so much to parents, our care should be so much the greater: and we should remember that we bring up our Children for the publick, and that if they live to be men, as they come out of our hands they will prove a publick happiness or mischief to the age. So that we can no better way deserve of mankind and be greater benefactors to the world, than by peopling it with a righteous offspring. Good Children are the hopes of posterity, and we cannot leave the world a better legacy than well disciplined Children. This

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gives the world the best security that religion will be propagated to posterity, and that the generations to come shall know God, *and the Children that are to be born shall fear the Lord.*

This was the great glory of Abraham, next to his being the friend of God, that he was the father of the faithful. And the careful Education of Children, *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, is so honourable to parents, God himself would not pass it by in Abraham without special mention of it to his everlasting commendation: *I know Abraham*, says God, *that he will command his Children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment.* Gen. xviii. 19.

Fifthly, Consider yet further the great evils consequent upon this neglect. And they are manifold. But not to enlarge particularly upon them, they all end in this, the final miscarriage and ruin of Children. Do but leave depraved corrupt nature to its self, and it will make its own course, and the end of it in all probability will be miserable.

If the generous seeds of religion and virtue be not carefully sown in the tender minds of Children, and those seeds be not cultivated by good Education, there will certainly spring up briars and thorns, of which parents will not only feel the inconveniences, but every body else that comes near them.

Neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris.

If the ground be not planted with something that is good, it will bring forth that which is
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either useless or hurtful, or both; for nature is seldom barren, it will either bring forth useful plants, or weeds.

We are naturally inclined to evil, and the neglect of Education puts Children upon a kind of necessity of becoming what they are naturally inclined to be. Do but let them alone, and they will soon be habituated to sin and vice. And when they are once accustomed to do evil, they have lost their liberty and choice: they are then hardly capable of good counsel and instruction; or if they be patient to hear it, they have no power to follow it, being bound in the chains of their sins, and led captive by Satan at his pleasure. And when they have brought themselves into this condition, their ruin seems to be sealed, and without a miracle of God's grace, they are never to be reclaimed.

Nor doth the mischief of this neglect end here, but it extends itself to the publick, and to posterity. If we neglect the good Education of our Children, they will in all probability prove bad men; and these will neglect their Children; and so the foundation of an endless mischief is laid; and our posterity will be bad members both of church and commonwealth.

If they be neglected in matter of instruction, they will either be ignorant or erroneous: either they will not mind religion, or they will disturb the church with new and wild opinions: and I fear, that the neglecting of instructing and catechizing youth, of which this age hath been

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so grossly guilty, hath made it so fruitful of errors and strange opinions.

But if besides this, no care be taken of their lives and manners, they will become burdens of the earth, and pests of human society, and so much poison and infection let abroad into the world.

Sixthly and lastly, Parents should often consider that the neglect of this duty will not only involve them in the inconvenience and shame, and sorrow, of their Childrens miscarriage, but in a great measure in the guilt of it: they will have a great share in all the evil they do, and be in some sort chargeable with all the sins they commit. If the Children bring forth wild and sour grapes, the parents teeth will be set on edge.

The temporal mischiefs and inconveniences which come from the careless Education of Children as to credit, health and estate, all which do usually suffer by the vicious and lewd courses of your Children; these methinks should awaken your care and diligence: but what is this to the guilt which will redound to you upon their account? Part of all their wickedness will be put upon your score; and possibly the sins, which they commit many years after you are dead and gone, will follow you into the other world, and bring new fuel to hell, to heat that furnace hotter upon you.

However, this is certain, that parents must one day be accountable for all the neglects of their Children: and so likewise shall ministers,
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and masters of families for their people and servants, so far as they had the charge of them.

And what will parents be able to say to God at the day of judgment for all the neglects of their Children, in matter of instruction, and example, and restraint from evil? How will it make your ears to tingle, when God shall arise terribly to judgment, and say to you, "Behold! the Children which I have given you; they were ignorant, and you instructed them not; they made themselves vile, and you restrained them not: Why did not you teach them at home, and bring them to church to the publick ordinances and worship of God, and train them up to the exercise of piety and devotion? But you did not only neglect to give them good instruction, but you gave them bad example: and lo! they have followed you to hell, to be an addition to your torment there.

"Unnatural wretches! that have thus neglected, and by your neglect destroyed those, whose happiness by so many bonds of duty and affection you were obliged to procure: behold! the books are now open, and there is not one prayer upon record that ever you put up for your Children: there is no memorial, no not so much as of one hour that ever was seriously spent to train them up to a sense of God, and to the knowledge of their duty: but on the contrary it appears, that you have many wise contrived their misery, and contributed to their ruin, and helped forward their damnation. How could you
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"be thus unnatural? How could you thus hate
"your own flesh, and hate your own souls?
"How much better had it been for them, and
"how much better for you, that they had ne-
"ver been born?"

Would not such a heavy charge as this make every joint of you to tremble? Will it not cut you to the heart, and pierce your very souls; to have your Children challenge you in that day, and say to you one by one, "Had you been as careful to teach me the good knowledge of the Lord, as I was capable of learning it: had you been but as forward to instruct me in my duty, as I was ready to have hearkened to it, it had not been with me as it is at this day; I had not now stood trembling here in a fearful expectation of the eternal doom which is just ready to be passed upon me. Cursed be the man that begat me, and the paps that gave me suck. 'Tis to you that I must in a great measure owe my everlasting undoing." Would it not strike any of us with horror to be thus challenged and reproached by our Children *in that great and terrible day of the Lord?*

I am not able to make so dreadful a representation of this matter as it deserves. But I would by all this, if it be possible, awaken parents to a sense of their duty, and terrify them out of this gross and shameful neglect which so many are guilty of. For when I seriously consider how supinely remiss and unconcerned many parents are as to the religious Education of their Children, I cannot but think of that saying of Augustus concerning Herod, "Better

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"be his dog than his child:" I think it was spoken to another purpose, but it is true likewise to the purpose I am speaking of: better be some mens dogs, or hawks, or horses, than their Children: for they take a greater care to breed and train up these to their several ends and uses, than to breed up their Children for eternal happiness.

Upon all these accounts, *train up a child in the way he should go, that when he is old he may not depart from it*: that neither your Children may be miserable by your fault, nor you by the neglect of so natural and necessary a duty towards them. God grant that all that are concerned may lay these things seriously to heart, for his mercies sake in Jesus Christ; to whom, with thee O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory both now and ever. Amen.

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S E R M O N XVIII.

The Nature and Necessity of redeeming the Time.

By Dr. SAMUEL CHANDLER.

EPH. v. 16.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

TH ESE words stand in immediate connection with those in the foregoing verse: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.* The Ephesians had by the Gospel revelation been made *light in the Lord*, ver. 8. instructed in the great principles and duties of Christianity; and therefore it became them to *walk circumspectly*, or with an exactness and care, suitable to that sacred knowledge they had received by their conversion to Christianity; *not as fools*, who have no rule of life to guide them; or if they have, neglect and refuse to walk by it: *but as wise*, persons who understand both their duty and interest, and have a becoming

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concern to discharge the one, and secure the other; and, as a proof of this, *redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

If these words be literally rendered, they will run thus: *buying the time*, or rather, *buying off*, or *buying out the time*; and the common interpretation of them is: That as Christians enjoy the Gospel light, have the knowledge of God, the clear discoveries of their duty, and the sure prospect of an eternal reward; they should carefully, as becomes wise and prudent persons, who *understand what is acceptable to the Lord*, improve these peculiar advantages, and faithfully employ the time which God allots them here, in the services and duties of the Christian life. And this is so useful and necessary an exhortation, as that I am unwilling to lose this sense of the words, if it can be maintained. And I think it may, for though some learned interpreters thus explain these words: endeavour by all honest ways, and prudent methods, to avoid the dangers, and escape the persecutions, to which these perilous times render you obnoxious; yet when the question is asked, *How must this time be bought off?* What are these prudent methods, by which we may defer these calamities, and disarm the hatred and malice of our persecutors? The true and only proper answer is, by an exact, circumspect, cautious behaviour; by avoiding all those crimes and immoralities, which the apostle had just cautioned the Ephesians against, and by improving that knowledge which they had as Christians, to an exemplary un-

blameable piety and virtue; that they might not give any just occasion to their enemies to reproach them, or punish them as evil-doers. So that taking the words in this view, the redemption or buying of the time will mean, the procuring and purchasing it for our use as Christians, and spending it in such a manner, as the light of the Gospel directs us; and the motive thus to do will be, that this is one of the most effectual methods we can take, to secure ourselves from all kinds of persecution, and to prolong our comfort and safety. And therefore in speaking to these words, I shall,

I. Enquire what this redemption of our time implies. And,

II. Set before you the motives by which the apostle enforceth this exhortation.

I. I am to enquire, What this redemption, or buying of the time implies. It should be observed here, that the expression is taken from mercantile life, and the custom of wise and diligent traders, who carefully watch for opportunities of buying well, instantly lay hold of every one that offers, and make it their own by securing the advantages it affords them. And life itself may justly, and not unelegantly, be compared to a kind of trade or merchandise. The great things to be acquired are knowledge, right dispositions of piety and virtue, a good character, and all that happiness which is connected with, and promised to these acquisitions. The time of life is the only opportunity for growing rich, and attaining to great prosperity, in this spiritual kind of commerce; and as providence

vidence puts many favourable opportunities into our hands, for the more successful management of it, the wise and diligent trader, who embarks in good earnest in this business, will carefully observe, and studiously improve them, in order to enrich himself with these genuine and substantial treasures, and buy out, and redeem the time from every thing that would engross it, or call him to a different application and consumption of it. We may observe here, that

The manner of the expression *buying off*, or *buying out the time*, seems to imply, that it is almost entirely engrossed by foreign hands, and that if ever we are so happy as to secure this invaluable blessing, it must be by way of purchase, and the parting with somewhat, that is accounted of great worth, for the sake of it. And how just is the representation ! There are many who know not how to estimate it, and what is the real use and improvement of it. Though it is continually present with them, and invites them to purchase and secure the possession of it, they suffer it to slide away absolutely unenjoyed, and to be stolen from them by every impertinence and trifle.

By some the time of life is lost and dissipated in indolence and sloth, who waste their lingering hours in doing nothing acceptable to God, useful to men, or for the improvement of themselves. The business of the world is in the whole of it too fatiguing for them. Publick stations of usefulness, that would interrupt their self indulgence, and require active vigour, are their abhorrence. Trade and commerce are

beneath them, or they cannot reconcile themselves to the drudgery and constant attendance, that is necessary to carry them on with success. Reading, and books, especially of a serious and useful nature, are quite insipid, and require too much application and closeness of thought, for them ever to be reconciled to. Religion is too severe, abstracted, gloomy a thing, and too uncertain, perplexed and intricate, to deserve or excite their attention. The improvement of their minds by principles of truth, good habits, and the acquirement of rational worthy dispositions and affections, requires too much self-denial, too frequent a contradiction to their prevailing passions, and such a perpetual labour and struggle, as terrifies them from attempting it, and at length suppresses every inclination to do it. In a word, they have contracted such an aversion to every thing that would interrupt their ease, and awaken them out of their supineness and sloth, as that their whole life is one continued scene of inaction, a mere waste and blank, in which there are no characters of manly industry and vigour; insomuch, that were they to recollect their own behaviour from year to year, they would scarce be able to find one single rational action that they have ever done, or one important duty, that they have rightly performed towards God or man.

The time of others is wholly ingrossed by sensual amusements and pleasures. They can relish nothing but gay diversions. The entertainments of the ear, the eye, the palate, is with them the great end and business of life. In their

their judgment, there is more happiness in a well spread table, splendid equipage, sumptuous apparel, an elegant politely furnished habitation, a gay assembly, a fashionable entertainment, and the like amusements, than can be derived from all the philosophical discoveries of the ancient or modern sages, or from all the manifestations of the perfections, providence, and counsels of God, in the books of nature and divine revelation. Persons of this cast may be justly compared to motes that dance and flutter in a sun beam, that appear only to shew their lightness and vanity, that have neither substance or beauty to recommend them, that are always busy without doing any thing of importance, and when they shine most, look most insignificant and contemptible.

The time of others is totally engrossed by affairs that seem more important and interesting; but which however do not constitute the principal, much less the whole business of life, nor in themselves contribute to the perfection and proper happiness of mankind, considered as rational creatures, nor answer the great ends and purposes for which their intellectual powers and faculties were given them by the author of their beings. They are perpetually employed in the cares of life, in a perpetual hurry of secular transactions, and wholly concerned in amassing riches for themselves and families, or making the necessary provisions for their support and comfort. Absolutely swallowed up in these concerns, they have no leisure for better acquisitions, no time for the cultivation and improve-

ment of their minds, nor any opportunities to *lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come*, and for securing that *inheritance which is incorruptible, and undefiled, that fadeth not away, and is reserved in Heaven for them*. Strange, that men should be indifferent only to the welfare of the best and noblest part of themselves, and be able to find time for every concern of their being, but that which is of all others the most important, and which would repay whatever share of it they should allow for this service with the most worthy and durable advantages.

If we add to this account, the time that is engrossed and spent in pursuits, that are directly criminal, offensive to God, and utterly inconsistent with all obligation and duty; the redemption of it will appear to be but little thought of by the generality of men; who had rather exchange and sell their time for the vanities, follies, and vices of life, than redeem and purchase it for the worthiest services, the noblest pleasures, and the highest happiness of their beings. They behave as if their time was only given them for prostituting, degrading, and destroying themselves, and thus madly counteract the intention of God in their formation. As though there was no excellency or charm in the knowledge of truth, in moral rectitude, in well regulated passions, in rightly formed dispositions, in the regular connected virtues of a good and useful life, and in the pleasures that flow from the conscious possession of those things; their aim and study is wholly to unprinciple themselves;

to suppress and eradicate every impression in favour of religion and virtue, to place appetite in the room of reason, to subdue conscience to inclination, to introduce and establish in themselves the basest and vilest affections, and to accumulate as much pollution, infamy and guilt, as they can, within the bounds of life allotted them; acting in reference to their time, as spendthrifts and prodigals do with their estates; wantonly wasting it without dignity, elegance, true taste, and substantial pleasure, because they know neither the proper use, or real worth of it, and have not sense or resolution enough to imploy it for their own advantage, or the benefit of others. So that time is too generally engrossed by, and becomes the property of indolence, pleasure, secular pursuits, and criminal gratifications. In these things is the grand consumption and waste of this precious and invaluable talent, which when once gone is never to be recovered, and the habitual waste of which cannot but be attended with the most fatal and destructive consequences. And from these considerations we shall learn, what the redemption or buying of our time properly implies. Particularly,

1. We must redeem and purchase our time from the sins and corruptions of life, which are the most dangerous and pernicious consumers of it, destroy the best opportunities that are put into our hands, and waste the whole season that is allotted us by God and nature for discharging our duty, and providing for our eternal welfare. Though there is a time or season

for all other things, there is none allowed for the practice of sin, because it is always out of season, and there is no period of our beings when it can be reasonable, beautiful or necessary. Every part of our time that we allot for this, is not to use, but to abuse it; not to enjoy, but to pervert it to our own dishonour and ruin; is not to *walk with circumspection*, but with rashness and presumption; not to act *as wise men*, but as fools, who have no becoming sense either of interest or duty, and to make *our days evil*, in the most aggravated sense of the expression. Sin is in its nature a deviation from every thing that is right, and therefore it cannot but be extremely wrong for men ever to indulge to it. It is a contradiction to the very end of our beings, and therefore can never be reconcileable with the obligations that arise out of them, or intended by God to employ any part of that time, with which he is pleased to intrust us, for very different and much better purposes. It destroys in men the very capacity and disposition for true happiness; and therefore, as guilt and misery could never be the original, primary intention of creation, it cannot be agreeable to the will of God, or the dictates of nature and reason, that we should *yield up ourselves as servants to sin*, which is the most comprehensive and aggravated of all evils, exposes the doers of it to the displeasure of God who made them, and subjects them to the most substantial and permanent destruction. It is the great view of the Gospel, and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, *to redeem us from*
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all iniquity; and the spending our days in the works of it, is to refuse the salvation he offers us, and doing what in us lies wholly to frustrate the purposes of his benevolence and goodness in coming into the world, and dying for us, that *he might reconcile us to God*, and render us capable of his acceptance and favour. The time of life is the period allowed us by providence for working the works of God, for usefulness in our stations, for the cultivation of our own minds, and securing the blessings of life and immortality. And the whole of it is but sufficient for answering these important purposes. But sin, when the habits of it become fixed and strong, and we have accustomed ourselves to the practice of it, destroys the very disposition, and creates a real aversion in us to every employment of a worthy, serious, manly, rational nature, suppresses every tendency to act becoming our beings, to improve ourselves in moral excellency, and to seek after the pure refined satisfactions of integrity, virtue and usefulness. A thousand opportunities for these sacred purposes, habitual vice will either prevent our discerning, or render us incapable of rightly improving. We must therefore redeem and buy off our time from those unrighteous engrossers, and cruel wasters of it. We must recover and snatch it out of their hands by resolution and diligence, give up all our corrupt affections and passions, that we may the more effectually secure the possession of it, and if possible, not allow a single moment of our lives for the doing that, which God hath commanded

manded us intirely to abstain from, and which in every instance of it is highly dishonourable to him, and injurious to ourselves. Again,

2. There is a great deal of time, that may and ought to be redeemed and purchased from the pleasures and amusements of life, and that should be consecrated to much more serious and important purposes. Avocations, I allow, there must be from the business of the world, and even from the very concerns of religion itself, that prudence and self preservation lead to, and justify. For the mind is not capable of perpetual attention, and the stretching our thoughts too intensely, and the being without relaxation engaged in the most interesting and momentous concerns, will frequently impair our very rational faculties, and weaken or destroy the capacities for discharging the duties and services of our stations. So that there is certainly a season for unbending ourselves, for retreating from every thing serious and severe, for intermitting the thoughts of business, and seeking out the proper recruits of nature from rest; and what is oftentimes more effectual, from the very amusements, and comparatively speaking, the impertinences of human life; from things, that would be real impertinences, were they not, in some degree, necessary in the present state, to call us off from close application, and to unbrace for a while the powers of the mind; and which always become unmanly and criminal impertinences, when they are made the whole imployment of mankind, and thrust out of their hearts the more weighty and serious concerns of their beings.

ings. Pleasure therefore is not to be absolutely and universally condemned. There are certain kinds and degrees of it that have their use and propriety; and when it is chosen and indulged within the prescriptions of reason and virtue, when it is suitable to mens stations and circumstances in life, when it is regulated with prudence, pursued, not as our whole or principal business, but as assistant and auxiliary to it, and to encrease and strengthen the relish and ability to carry it on for the future; when it is enjoyed in its proper season, and contracted within due limits and periods of time; in pleasure thus circumstanced I can see no sin, and therefore cannot blame what I apprehend is by no means blame-worthy. Yea, I think it may sometimes be equally our duty to admit and indulge to such temporal amusements, as at other times wholly to abstain from, and suppress the inclination to them; and whenever the circumstances of our health, and the recruit of our spirits demand it; when the renewing our inclination and vigour of mind for the discharge of the necessary duties, connected with our stations and characters in the world, call for and require it; both nature and providence, that point out the remedy, shew the propriety, and vindicate the necessity of using it. But how mean, how low and despicable is a life of pleasure, that is wholly devoted to unsubstantial amusements, and unmeaning trifles! When nothing can please or entertain that requires thought and reflection; nothing but what custom creates, fashion authorises, sense relishes, and

and false imagination enhances the value of! When the taste reaches no farther than dress, ceremony, visit, refined methods of luxury, and those polite diversions, by which so many choose to cheat themselves out of the usefulness, dignity and happiness of life, and to dissipate, waste, and kill, the tedious hours of a vacant, insipid, and senseless existence! Now from these destroyers of time, a wise and good man will carefully redeem it, by checking in himself the tendency and inclination to gratifications of this kind; by not too frequently indulging even to lawful amusements, that he may not contract an habitual fondness for them, nor grow uneasy for the want of them; by reducing, as much as he can, the time he allots himself to partake of them; by never neglecting affairs of real moment for the sake of them, but by preferring obligation and duty to them, whenever they interfere; and always rejecting them with contempt, when they are criminal in their nature, and unworthy his pursuit, as a man of religion and virtue. This every one owes to himself, as he would not be esteemed a trifler in the world, nothing being more insignificant and despicable than he, who is entirely devoted to the pursuit of pleasure; as he would not lose the very end of life, which can never be answered by habitual folly and impertinence; and as he would not finally forfeit the real happiness of his nature, which can never be found in the way of sensual gratification and amusement. And this redemption of our time from pleasure is more necessary, when persons
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are entered into family connections, and have others to observe them, and form themselves after their examples. Such will, in prudence and duty, be frequently obliged to put a restraint upon themselves for the sake of others, and to deny themselves many innocent indulgences, they might otherwise lawfully share, to prevent that growing disposition in them to trifles and follies, which if rooted in their minds, is utterly inconsistent with the pursuit of every thing that is excellent and praise-worthy. And this is what experience verifies the truth of. For families, that are wholly bred up to a taste of pleasure, and gay diversions, appear to have no inclination or relish for any thing else. Their imaginations are wholly possessed with them, they are dissatisfied and unhappy, when they are prevented from enjoying them, and nothing that is serious or rational can supply the want of them, or employ those hours, which they had devoted to gayer scenes, and the pursuit of more polite and fashionable amusements. In such the principles of religion, the dispositions of virtue, the desire of being useful, and the glorious ambition to excel in all the high attainments of wisdom, moral rectitude and goodness, must be in their nature feeble and ineffectual, gradually wear out, and in the end be totally extinguished and lost; whereby they themselves become wholly lost to the world, and prove not only useless, but burthensome and pernicious members of society. This then is the prudent care that we owe to ourselves and families, never to pursue the pleasures of life to the prejudice

dice of our own best interest, or so as to corrupt and pervert them; lest we and they should deserve that infamous character, which reason and revelation both point out as highly criminal, of being *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*. Let me add,

3. That there are many valuable opportunities, that may and ought to be redeemed from indolence and sloth. Some parts of our time are frequently vacant and unemployed, engrossed neither by pleasure nor business, that lie heavy upon our hands, and which for want of having any thing to do, we too often devote to the doing nothing at all; giving ourselves up to a kind of absolute inactivity, a state of mere ease and idleness, in which both mind and body are excluded from action, as though there was nothing good or useful, in which we could exercise either. I own there may be circumstances in which even this may be proper and necessary. But surely a life of indolence can never be any man's duty or interest, nor eating, drinking, dreaming awake, and sleeping, be all that men, as reasonable beings, were made for; nor can we answer it to God, or ourselves, or others, to make idleness, if the impropriety may be forgiven me, the sole or principal business which we are to attend to. Our bodies were formed on purpose for action and industry, and the constitution of them is such, as that they will necessarily grow corrupted and diseased, contract painful or mortal distempers, unless they are kept in suitable and constant exercise. And we find that it generally happens in fact, that persons

sons of indulgence and indolence feel to their cost the bad effects of them, either in the disorder, decay, and ruin of their temporal affairs, or in sinking and lowness of spirits, the loss of their health, or such a complication of distempers, as either condemns them to chronical pains, or as shortens their lives, and renders them a burthen whilst they are continued. In like manner the faculties of the mind are in their nature active, render us capable of a thousand rational pursuits, and innumerable worthy enjoyments and satisfactions; and there is nothing of consequence to be done, no acquisitions in useful knowledge to be obtained, no improvements of the mind in the worthiest affections and dispositions to be carried on, no effectual method that can be taken, for securing the happiness of time and eternity, without exerting ourselves, pressing the body into the service, and a diligent application of the powers of the mind, to promote these great and valuable purposes. Hence it is that revelation abounds with exhortations to watchfulness, diligence, and active industry, and bids us to *gird up the loins of our minds, to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure*, and carefully to improve the various talents that we are entrusted with, as we would not fall under the condemnation of *slotful and wicked servants*, but obtain the commendation of *good and faithful ones*. And if we were as provident of our time, and as careful of ourselves and our best interests, as we ought to be, we should watch our opportunities, and redeem many a good hour from sleep, the

reſeries of life, the thoughtleſs, uningroſſed, unactive moments of it, and inſtead of waſting them in the heavy, tedious, inſipid drudgery of doing nothing, ſhould turn them into moments of great uſefulneſs to ourſelves, or high advantage to others. Again,

4. Whatever be our affairs, merely relative to the preſent life, or the engagements of ſecular buſineſs we are converſant in, and of how great importance ſoever the right and prudent management of them may be, yet there is a part of our time, that ſhould be bought off and redeemed even from theſe, that we may have leiſure to attend on thoſe concerns, which relate to us as reaſonable beings, and moral agents, and pay a due regard to the conſideration, intereſts, and demands of a future life. If the world to come were but to be conſidered as a mere poſſibility, it would be a wiſe and prudent thing to beſtow ſome ſerious thoughts on it, and to prevent the poſſibility of certain and irrecoverable ruin in it. If the exiſtence of it be extremely probable, and rendered certain and indiſputable by divine revelation, the neceſſity and importance of regarding it, of inquiring into the nature of it, the realities that are to take place in it, the qualifications to inherit the bleſſings of it, and what muſt be done for ſecuring ourſelves from poverty, contempt, and miſery, when we become the inhabitants of it, appear ſtill in a much ſtronger and more convincing view, and the folly of living here thoughtleſs, indifferent and unconcerned about it will be acknowledged by every
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one that passes a proper and impartial judgment.

One principal end of our reason is, to enable us to look into futurity, to survey what may be the wants and inconveniences of it, and to make the best provision we can to prevent them. And yet what is a more absolute uncertainty than the continuance of the present life? And tho' men are continually anxious about, and endeavouring to provide for many years to come, they are far from being sure they shall live to the end of the present. And yet, notwithstanding this uncertainty, would not any one be justly deemed as a despicable and impertinent reasoner, who, because he is not sure that he shall live to-morrow, should infer, that therefore it is prudent and necessary, that he should take thought only for to-day? And in practice, would not he be looked on as a fool or madman, who should determine to make the most of the present year, and procure himself every kind of gratification and pleasure he is capable of purchasing, at the expence of the happiness of his whole future life, because he cannot be sure of any part of time besides the present? Reflection and wisdom teach men to be provident for the time to come; and as the care of futurity doth not at all interfere with the true enjoyment of the present season, but rather secures and heightens it, as it keeps off anxiety, and is the most effectual method to ward off distant evils; so if any of the lesser interests of to-day should be any ways inconsistent with the rational views and necessary schemes of to-morrow,

common sense will teach us to postpone what with safety may be now omitted, for the sake of effectually minding what cannot be omitted, consistent with the prudent regards, that are due to hereafter, and always to make every lesser concern give way to such as are confessedly greater.

And if this reasoning be good in any case, it must hold in every one, and gives us a rule, that should be the guide of our conduct throughout the whole of life; and is as conclusive when applied to the care of our minds, and the grand concerns of the future world, as it can be when applied to any of the differing interests of the present. If this life is not the whole of our existence, it should not engross the whole of our thoughts and care; and that just for the same reason, that our solicitude to live to-day should not make us indifferent as to what may happen on the morrow. And as a future life is of much greater importance to us than that which we now live can be, because it is everlasting in its duration; so when the interests of these two interfere, that which is the less important must be given up, that we may more effectually manage and secure the greater: by the same rule of prudence, that leads every wise man, in transacting his secular affairs, to make trifles, and comparatively indifferent things, give way to those which are of the greatest consequence to his prosperity. All the most serious and interesting of our worldly concerns relate only to the body, and a very small and inconsiderable part of our existence. But if we have

have a reasonable spirit that is to outlive the body, and is of an everlasting duration, and is therefore of infinitely greater value than the perishing body, which it animates, can be, it claims and deserves our attention and solicitude; and the same understanding and discretion, the same principle of self-preservation, that excites us to provide for the wants and conveniences of the one, will, if we duly regard it, effectually excite us to be provident for the welfare and happiness of the other. And as it would be preposterous and absurd, for any man to be extremely anxious about his cloathing, spending his whole time about the ornaments of dress, or wholly occupied about the furniture of his dwelling, that takes no care about providing his daily bread, and is likely to perish with hunger; is not the absurdity equal, in suffering ourselves to be entirely engrossed with the thoughts, how we shall support and adorn these earthly tabernacles of our bodies, and suffer those immortal spirits, that dwell in them, to starve and pine, and be utterly lost, through an unnatural indifference to their welfare, and a cruel neglect of their salvation and happiness. Every interesting consideration therefore demands of us the redemption of some part of our time from the secular concerns of life, because we have other things to manage of more real importance to us. This world ought not absolutely and entirely to engross us; and if there are any, who are so thoroughly immersed in the cares of it, as to have no leisure to mind any thing else, nor any part of their time to spare

to grow rich for eternity, and secure to themselves the incorruptible blessings of the heavenly world; they are, with all their acquisitions, extremely unhappy persons, and they would do well seriously to consider, and lay to heart, those words of our blessed Saviour, Matt. xvii. 26. *What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?* Once more, 5, and lastly, We should redeem our time by laying hold of, and diligently improving all those peculiar opportunities, which providence throws into our hands, and seems to offer us, principally or purely, for the most important and valuable purposes of our beings, and not suffer ourselves to be defrauded out of them, by any thing that would engross and waste them, or pervert them to any other uses and services whatsoever. A great deal of time may be rescued and bought off from the various consumers of it, by prudent management, in almost every circumstance and condition whatsoever; few being, if they had the inclination to it, straitened for the hours necessary to serve God acceptably, and secure their own salvation. But however, if there are any seasons that present themselves for these purposes, and that by the very nature of them seem to claim and invite us to this improvement of them, the suffering ourselves to be cheated out of them, and letting them slip through our hands, without turning them to their right use, is not only folly with regard

regard to ourselves, but a very criminal instance of disrespect and want of obedience to God.

Persons, whose circumstances place them above the necessity of a perpetual application to business, who have their time at their command, and can create themselves hours of leisure and reflection whenever they please, are wholly inexcusable if they do not attend to things of a religious and moral nature. Such an attention is not only their unquestionable duty, but it would soon become an extremely pleasing entertainment, agreeably increase the varieties of life, and most profitably pass away many of those moments and hours, which, in those of great leisure, frequently hang heavy upon their hands, and grow insipid and tedious, for their being at a loss, how suitably to employ them.

As to others, whose situation is more involved, who are more immersed in the affairs of trade and commerce, and have perpetual avocations of business to engross their heads and hearts; business of that importance, as that it cannot be with safety omitted, and so various, as that ordinarily speaking they can have but little leisure closely to apply to any thing else; as there are some intervals, which even such persons can and do spare from their ordinary transactions, and the multiplicity of their affairs, and which are usually appropriated by them to certain exercises and pleasures, that are esteemed necessary for the preservation of their health; I should think that they may be some of them appropriated to entertainments of a much more profitable nature; such as would tend to the

health of the mind, the curing its disorders, the preserving the vigour of its reasonable powers and faculties, and the preparing it for, and rendering it capable of its final and supreme felicity. There is, I should imagine, scarce a morning or evening that passes over our heads, but a truly provident person will be able to purchase a few minutes from all the other affairs and duties of the day before him, to recollect himself, to impress these awes on his mind, that may better guard him against the temptations and snares of life, and secure that protection and blessing of providence, that is necessary to his safety and welfare. If persons have none of these intervals from business, but the whole of their time is taken up in transacting their worldly affairs, they should at least stop one moment, and ask themselves: Whether their pursuit of riches, to the total neglect of all the other great purposes of life, be indeed necessary, prudent, or lawful, and will be pleaded, or allowed hereafter in justification of their conduct, at that impartial tribunal, before which they must account for all their actions? I never yet saw it proved, that the amassing so many thousands, or the purchasing so many acres of ground, or the daily provisions of a luxurious table, or the splendor, elegance, and shew of life, are the circumstances which give men any intrinsic worth, recommend them to the esteem and approbation of God, or contribute to their own real welfare and happiness. 'Till this is proved, the plea, that we have no leisure from our worldly affairs, to attend to those of a superior

perior nature, is not the plea of reason and prudence, and will finally be found impertinent and insufficient. We know the fate of those, who when invited to the marriage supper, *made light of it, and went, one to his farm, and another to his merchandize*, and that they were absolutely excluded from the provisions of it; (Matt. xxii. 5. Luke xiv. 16, &c. comp.) to teach us, that such an attachment to our temporal concerns, as renders us indifferent to, and careless of the blessings of the Gospel, offered to our acceptance by God through Christ, will be hereafter looked on as a criminal contempt of them, and for ever debar us from enjoying them.

The season of confinement by bodily disorder and sickness, may be justly looked on as an opportunity put into our hands, by a kind providence, for the best and most valuable purposes; as they interrupt the course of our pleasures, and prevent all the pursuits of secular life; shew the vanity of riches, and how many of the most important demands of our nature they are absolutely incapable of answering. They seem to be intended, either gently or more powerfully to force us, to retire within ourselves, to discuss our consciences, to reflect from whence our true happiness must come, to recover us from former errors, and to persuade us into a wiser and better course for the future. And he who doth not make them subservient to these ends, is not wise for himself, a friend to his best interest, nor makes the due returns he owes to his God, who *corrects him for his profit*,

and intends his highest happiness by the evils that confine him.

If such opportunities as these should seldom happen, yet God himself hath excepted one day in seven from all the secular concerns of life, and evidently appropriated and consecrated it, by his blessing, to purposes of an higher and better nature; as it was from the beginning ordained by him, to be an eternal memorial, to the end of the world, of his being the universal Creator; and hath been since separated by the Christian church, to the farther use of perpetuating the remembrance of the great work of redemption, finished by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. But how can it be a memorial of either of these great events to men, who never think of God on it as the Creator of the world, nor of Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of it; nor of themselves as formed by and dependent on the divine power, nor as saved by the death and resurrection of Christ? If they have no leisure for reflections of this nature on other days, they have, or may and ought to have leisure for them on this. If they cannot with any conveniency seriously enter into such subjects on the days of secular business, and will not do it on the returning stated day of rest, what is the plain language of such a conduct, but that they are determined never to attend to such reflections at all? The six days shall be wholly devoted to the affairs of their trade and commerce, and the seventh be considered merely as a day of recreation and pleasure, that they may return with fresh vigour

gour and alacrity to the ordinary services and employments they are engaged in. Where this is the scheme of life resolved on, all the more valuable interests of mens beings must be habitually neglected; and however wise they may be for the present time and world, they shew themselves extremely improvident for futurity; that they do not understand the real value of their time, and are not sensible how well worth their while it is, and how abundantly it will repay them, to redeem a proper part of it from all secular pursuits, and appropriate it to the cultivation and improvement of their minds, and the necessary purposes of their eternal salvation and happiness. But this would lead us to the other consideration implied in this redemption of our time, which will be fully considered in the following discourse.

S E R M O N XIX.

The Nature and Necessity of Redeeming the Time.

By Dr. SAMUEL CHANDLER.

PART II.

EPH. v. 16.

Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

IN speaking to these words I have proposed,
I. To enquire what this redemption of time implies. And

II. To set before you the motives made use of by our apostle, to enforce this exhortation.

The manner of the exhortation of *buying off*, or *redeeming our time*, seems to imply, that it is greatly engrossed by a sort of foreign hands, and that it is not to be recovered but by parting with somewhat that is esteemed very valuable for the sake of it. And accordingly, how much

much of the time of life is taken up by indolence and sloth? How much wasted and devoured by sensual amusements and pleasures? How great a part of it claimed by, and devoted to the mere secular concerns of life? And as to many, they are almost entirely cheated and plundered of all their time by their criminal passions, and those irregular gratifications that are dishonourable in their nature, inconsistent with their true happiness, and extremely displeasing and offensive to God. Now,

The *Redemption* or *buying off* our time, implies our recovering it from all these great engrossers and consumers of it, and our appropriating it to, and employing it in those different pursuits and purposes, for which the great author of our nature hath entrusted us with this invaluable talent.

1. We must recover a proper portion of it from those things that would unrighteously engross and consume it. No part of it must be given up to our corrupt passions, and the directly sinful pursuits of sensual and profligate men. Much may and ought to be redeemed from pleasure and amusement. Little should be allowed to mere indolence and sloth. And as to the secular affairs of the world, though they claim and deserve a considerable share of our time, yet they ought not to engross the whole of it. Some part should be selected from them, and such a part as is sufficient for the successful management of those more important and interesting affairs, that relate to the more valuable part of our frame, and that future

ture eternal world we are soon to commence the inhabitants of. And if there are any peculiar seasons and opportunities that providence at any time puts into our hands for these better purposes; wisdom, interest and duty all oblige us to take care, that nothing deceive us out of them, and prevent that improvement of them, for which it hath pleased God to intrust us with them. But this brings me

2. To the second thing implied in this *Redemption*, or *buying off the time*; which is, that we not only recover it from all those things that would engross and waste it, but that we appropriate it to, and diligently employ it in those more worthy pursuits and nobler purposes, which will secure the most valuable and durable advantages, and for which our natures are evidently calculated and originally designed.

1. As the whole of our frame is not material, as these organised bodies inclose within them spirits of a much higher original, and endowed with nobler properties; how much are we concerned in duty and interest to consult their welfare, and appropriate all those seasons of life to the care of them, which their unspeakable worth deserves and demands?

If there are wants peculiar to them, as well as necessities to which our bodies are subject, the attention to the one should not exclude a proper regard to the other, nor render us indifferent to the providing for it every needful supply. Should any one press us to that constancy of devotion, and that perpetual attention to things of a religious nature, as would ex-
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clude all application to and concern about our worldly affairs; we should charge him, and that justly, with recommending superstition in the room of true religion, and for giving advice that no man could or ought to follow; because the careful management of our temporal concerns is one of the essential duties of the present state, and the supply of our bodily wants, and procuring the conveniencies which nature and providence offer us, is necessary to the preservation, comfort and usefulness of life. But is it not at least an equal impropriety of conduct, wholly unjustifiable and absurd, to spend the whole time of our sojourning here in pursuits merely relative to the body, to the utter neglect of the more excellent part of our frame, and those infinitely more important wants to which they are subject? Can the rational and divine life in the immortal principle be maintained, and its dignity, peace, self-possession and felicity be secured, whilst it is empty and destitute of everything that can feed, nourish, enliven and invigorate it? What are the true riches which the mind rejoices in the possession of? What the proper food for an immortal spirit to be recruited and satisfied with? What those acquisitions its natural desires lead to, and its faculties render it capable of attaining; and what the ingredients that constitute its perfection, and form its happiness? How destitute and utterly unprovided is it without knowledge, the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ, *whom to know is life eternal*; without understanding its duty and interest, and the great things that belong to its eternal peace?

peace? How poor and wretched is its condition, whilst empty of those excellent dispositions, both human and divine, that are its distinguishing riches and its very meetness for its final and supream happiness? How unspeakably dreadful is its state, how deep its poverty, whilst without any share in the peculiar blessings of the gospel of Christ, without pardon and reconciliation to God, without recovery from the bondage of sin, without rectitude of nature and conformity to God, without hope in him, and void of that peace that flows from an interest in his favour; without any title to life and immortality, and the least reasonable prospect of eternal blessedness and glory? To be destitute of these things is to be poor in the extreamest degree. Wants of this nature infer substantial, aggravated, total misery, and that must, without timely relief, entail upon us everlasting wretchedness. And as this poverty and distress can never be prevented without care and diligence, no part of our time can be so well employed, as that which is appropriated and spent in the providing and laying up those true riches, which alone can secure us against it. Again,

If the nobler part of our frame be subject to manifold disorders, and moral distempers, which, if prevalent and not timely corrected and cured, will bring on pain, and misery, and death; surely we should be as careful to prevent or remove them, as we would be to guard against the diseases of our bodies, or to apply those remedies that are necessary to hinder them from growing incurable and becoming mortal.

mortal. And how various are the disorders to which our minds are liable? How often are they blinded by ignorance and error, corrupted and perverted by prejudice and inclination, convulsed by passion, wasted by envy, racked and tortured by hatred, ulcerated by malice, swollen with the poison of ambition and pride, cancred by avarice, distracted with anxieties and fears, and torn as it were in pieces, and excruciated by numerous turbulent and contrary affections, that eat out their peace, render them incapable of self-enjoyment, and subject them to the most aggravated distresses? And is there no compassion due to them, no care that we ought to employ, if possible, to ward off these fatal diseases, and unhappy consequences that are sure to attend them; or if they have been contracted, should we, by indifference and neglect, permit them to grow obstinate and incurable, till at length we fall by them into remediless destruction? Surely therefore there must be some share of our time, that must be redeemed from every other employment, and appropriated to this salutary work, if we have any due sense of what we owe to our safety, and are not blinded and hardened, so as we cannot discern, or will not pursue the most evident dictates both of interest and duty. Again,

If there are any proper ornaments necessary to cloath the mind, and to make it appear with propriety, elegance and dignity, and recommend it to God and man; there should, in all good prudence, be a proper share of our time allotted to prepare and regulate this moral
dress,

dress ; and we ought not to begrudge that proportion of it, which is necessary thus to cloath and adorn ourselves. Even the care of bodily dress should not be wholly neglected, and he would scarce find admision into the company of polite and well bred persons, whose habit was mean and sordid, negligent and offensive. A mind that is naked and unadorned, or covered with impurity, how unpleasing must it be to his eye, who clearly discerns the state of it ; and with what aversion must it be beheld by every intelligent being, who can form any proper sentiment of decency, purity and elegance ? The true ornament of our natures, as rational, consists in the confirmed habits of religion and virtue ; in dispositions of piety towards God, faith and hope, fear and reverence, trust and confidence, submission and resignation, and the like sacred graces ; in right affections and dispositions towards men ; dispositions of honour, justice, equity, veracity, candour, goodness, benevolence and charity in all the various kinds of it ; and in the possession of that universal moderation and temperance, in all our animal propensities and desires, without which nothing divine, excellent and praiseworthy in us can flourish, or come to any maturity. But these moral habits are not to be acquired without diligence and care, nor these sacred dispositions to be cultivated, improved and carried on to their full perfection, unless we buy up some part of our time, and apply it to this important service.

And as all our best sentiments and dispositions are to be strengthened for the sake of those
excellent

excellent fruits, which they naturally tend to produce ; the abounding in these fruits, and thus bringing these internal springs of conduct into life and action, is another necessary part of human duty ; and every opportunity we have for doing well, discharging our obligations, and being useful in our several stations, should be instantly laid hold of, and not suffered to be lost, without a diligent and faithful improvement. Religion and virtue are practical things, and appear most amiable and lovely, when they enter visibly into the Christian character, and influence and govern the whole of the behaviour. They do not consist only in the exercise of internal and invisible affections ; but like good seed spring up in answerable productions, whereby the nature, the life and vigour of the latent principles, that give them being, are as manifestly discovered, as the nature of the grain is by the fruits that arise from them.

2. If by our nature and rank in the creation, there are other beings, to which we bear certain necessary relations, out of which relations there are many certain obligations and duties arising ; nothing can be more evident than that we are to regard these important obligations, and allot a due proportion of our time to answer the just claims of others, and in a conscientious discharge of the duties we owe them. And therefore if we have right dispositions towards God, they will lead us to all rational acts of devotion and piety, as the proper expressions of the internal veneration we cherish

towards him, and discover themselves by earnest supplications for all needed blessings, in grateful thanksgivings for mercies received, in thankful remembrance for God's peculiar grace in our redemption by Jesus Christ, in giving our public testimony to the being, perfections, and providence of God, by joining in the solemnities of social worship, and in a chearful habitual submission to his authority and will, in all the known and proper instances of it. And therefore the affair of religion, as it hath a claim to our most serious regard, hath a just demand upon our time, and proper seasons should be allotted and redeemed from every other concern of life, for the sacred exercises essential to it, and obtaining the benefits and pleasures attending it. In like manner, if the social affections possess and duly influence us, enter into our temper and form our character, they will appear in all the social duties of human life, and men will purchase the opportunities for gratifying these benevolent and pleasing propensities, even though it be at the expence of many less important pursuits and indulgences. We are none of us formed only for ourselves, but for the benefit of others. Our acquisitions in life, and the encrease of our plenty, are not to be considered merely as the means of a more liberal indulgence of our appetites and passions, or gratifying the calls of pride and luxury. Our superior talents of mind, our greater knowledge either in things of religion, or the prudentials of life; our larger experience, and better acquaintance with men and things, are not

not endowments that should be applied only to our own personal interests, or promoting our own private happiness ; but that qualify us for more extensive usefulness, and for being the kind instruments of providence in assisting, supporting, and contributing to the peace, comfort, and usefulness of others. And therefore truly benevolent minds will find, or make opportunities for doing good, and if they can no otherwise create them, will purchase them from self indulgence, from the claims of personal interest, and from every other engagement and amusement of life, that would tempt them to suppress the generous inclination, and prevent them from acting according to the dictates of it. And,

3. Finally, if the present life be not the whole of our existence, but we are intended for a future and unchangeable state, we are by every call of prudence, interest and duty, bound to make a due provision for the life and world to come, and redeem so much of our present time from all other affairs, as is necessary to guard against eternal poverty and distress, and obtain the possession of those true and incorruptible treasures, that may secure us hereafter, every thing necessary to our well being, and secure the dignity and happiness of our natures throughout every period of that eternal duration ; and there cannot be a more childish or criminal impertinence, than in being anxious and solicitous, and perpetually busied in affairs relative only to the present life, which is at best but short, and in the whole

of it precarious; and without any serious thoughts and concern for that future state, in which our existence and condition will be immutable and eternal.

The great art in this complicated business of human life, is so to manage it, as that our whole conduct may be regular, and no important duty may interfere with another; that our engagements may not be perplexed, nor any one particular interest be neglected, through an undue attention to another. Our opportunities for all of them should be prudently selected, and each concern we have to manage with God, our neighbour and ourselves, have its proper season allotted to it, that we may transact it with more comfort and better success. Religion itself may be unseasonable, and really is so, when we suffer it to engross so much of our time, as renders us negligent in, and proves detrimental to the necessary affairs we have to transact in the world. Nor are the concerns of life to be so intirely regarded, as to leave no room for our application to those of a more serious and important nature. Personal gratifications and advantages should not make us indifferent to the welfare of others, and therefore not employ the whole of our attention and time; nor the disposition to be useful to others be so far indulged, as to render us unmindful of what we owe to ourselves, and prevent a due care of our own particular interests. There is a time for all things, and every thing is beautiful in its season; and as one principal part of the pleasure of life, consists
in

in the variety of scenes that present themselves before us, and that perpetual change of objects and pursuits that claim our attention; the very diversity of our duty to God and man will make a very pleasing variety, if we attend to the proper seasons and opportunities for them: And we may then, with the greatest propriety, be said to buy off, to purchase and redeem the time, when we allow to each duty its proper portion, serve the Lord without distraction and confusion, and make the whole of life, a regular, orderly, well connected series of religion, virtue and usefulness. And this brings me to the

II. Second general I proposed to speak to from these words, which is to set before you the motives offered by the apostle, to enforce this exhortation. *See therefore, that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* And here,

I. This redemption of our time is absolutely necessary to our *walking circumspectly*, or with that exactness and regularity, which is necessary to our comfort and safety. *See that ye walk circumspectly redeeming time*; the diligently securing and wisely improving every season that offers for doing *what is acceptable to the Lord*, and securing our own salvation, being indispensibly requisite to that exact regulation and good conduct of our lives, which becomes our Christian character. This is so visible in the common affairs of life, as that every man of the most moderate understanding

and least experience will readily acknowledge it. His time is properly his all, because his all depends on the use he makes of it; and there are many favourable opportunities that offer in almost every one's life, for bettering his circumstances, and securing some very peculiar advantages, which, if not rescued from the destruction of indolence and pleasure, and appropriated with diligence and prudence, will be lost for ever, and not offer themselves a second time. When men have a variety of affairs to manage, and different engagements that demand and deserve their attention; if they are not frugal of their time, do not allot it out in proper portions, and keep to the appointments they have respectively fixed; every thing will be in confusion and disorder, one affair interfere with another, some must be neglected, others badly managed, others partially and by halves, and throughout all their measures there will evidently be wanting that regularity, connection and good œconomy, on which the pleasure, and generally speaking, the very success of all business depends. It is the same in the Christian life; there is an exactness of conduct that every one should aim at; every duty should have its proper seasons and there should be room for the exercise of every virtue in the Christian character, when the providence of God calls for it. A regular Christian who walks exactly, will not generally suffer one duty of importance to interfere with another, but will find the proper season for managing every thing of consequence,
for

for his duty to God, his family, his secular affairs, his neighbour and himself; for health, for pleasure, for business, for taking care of his body and soul, and successfully managing the affairs of time and eternity. This may be done by recollection and diligence, by looking upon our time as our riches, by guarding against all unnecessary waste and idle consumption of it, and utterly discarding all those vanities and follies, that cannot be indulged without too great an expence of our time, and require a much more assiduous attention than they deserve. But,

2. Another argument offered by the apostle for our redeeming the time is, *because the days are evil*; and they may be very justly said to be so, on a twofold account.

When the circumstances of the times we live in are unfavourable to the cause of religion, and render the profession of it difficult and hazardous. The days in which the apostle lived, were days of severe persecution and fiery trial, when the fidelity of Christians to their great Lord and Master exposed them to the greatest temporal inconveniences, even the forfeiture of estate, liberty and life. And therefore the advice in my text to the Ephesian converts, to *redeem their time, because the days were evil*, implies primarily, as some learned interpreters think, that they should by all honest ways and prudent methods, endeavour to avoid the dangers, and escape the persecutions, to which those dangerous times rendered them obnoxious. And in this interpretation I acquiesce,

provided the honest and prudent methods spoken of, as necessary to escape persecution, are those of an unblameable Christian piety and virtue, or the steady exemplary practice of all the duties essential to the Christian character, and answerable to the peculiar advantages they enjoyed by the gospel revelation. Thus the *redeeming our time, because the days are evil*, will furnish us with this important motive for doing it; viz. that the improving our time as the gospel directs us, in obedience to the will of God, and doing every thing that is just and humane, virtuous and praise-worthy, is the most effectual method we can take to secure ourselves from the malice of bad men, and all kind of injuries and persecutions for the sake of that religion which we profess.

There is somewhat so truly amiable and venerable in the behaviour of a regular genuine Christian, as cannot fail of drawing esteem, and as will always intitle to, and frequently secure him the protection even of bad men, in whom the best traces of reason, and the natural byass in favour of true goodness are not wholly effaced. It is impossible that real piety and genuine virtue can be in themselves objects of displeasure and aversion. The pretence to these things, where the reality is wanting, is extremely offensive to all men; they abhor it by a kind of instinct, and wherever it appears in its proper form, it creates a just indignation and hatred; and this hatred to hypocrisy in religion hath been too often transferred to religion itself, even when the profession of it hath been sincere.

sincere. When men who have made extraordinary pretences to sanctity, and listed themselves amongst the strictest professors of religion, have been at last found out to be crafty designing cheats, who have put on the garb of godliness, only the better to carry on their private views of power and wealth, to hide their crimes, and secure their reputation; it is no wonder that many who observe them, and judge of things only by external appearances, and of principles solely by the conduct of those who profess to believe them, should judge these principles themselves to be bad, when they see those who hold them to be deceitful and wicked, and censure all pretences to, and appearances of godliness to be mere pretence and hypocrisy, when they find by experience that this is the case of some or many who have made the greatest.

It is the immoral profligate lives of those who call themselves Christians, that exposes their religion to contempt, renders the professors of it in general suspected and hated, and often raises up the fury of persecution against them; whilst it is an invariable truth, that the love and practice of righteousness, probity, goodness of manners, and an unblemished sanctity of behaviour, is both doing the highest credit to Christianity, and greatly tends to the protection and security of all its professors. Again,

The times may be said to be evil, when they abound with great and numerous temptations to desert the paths of truth and righteousness,

ness, and to draw us into principles and practices, inconsistent with our Christian obligations and duty. This is plainly the meaning of the expression, in that exhortation of St. Paul to the Ephesians: *Put ye on the whole armour of God, that ye maybe able to stand against the wiles of the Devil, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having conquered all, may be able to stand.* Eph. vi. 11, 13. The *evil day* is evidently the day of temptation, arising from the wiles of the evil one, and from the violences of persecution, to frighten and terrify men out of their fidelity and adherence to Christ. And the temptations from both these are very dangerous, requiring the utmost resolution to withstand them, and the greatest prudence of behaviour to guard against them. In such circumstances the redemption of time, and saving and improving all we can to strengthen our principles, to confirm our good habits, to fortify our resolution, to preserve ourselves from every bad impression on our minds, and guard against all fickleness and inconstancy, all partial declensions, all favourable suggestions in behalf of irreligion and vice, all tendencies to criminal compliances, and the first beginnings of apostacy from God and goodness; in circumstances, I say, of such prevailing temptation, the redemption of our time for these purposes is peculiarly necessary.

Many are the arts of vice in all ages to delude men into guilt and ruin; but the times are more especially dangerous, when the principles of religion are generally disregarded or
thrown

thrown off, when all pretences to it become fashionable amongst the rich and great, the polite and well bred part of mankind, as they are called; when pleasure is the prevailing taste, and the opportunities for indulging it numerous and increasing; when the general example leads to it, and seducers and deceivers are every where to be met with, to draw in the unwary and incautious; and especially when persons are in that age and situation of life, as that pleasure seems amiable and inviting, hath a party in their own breasts that solicits in behalf of it, and warm inclinations that support its interest, and powerfully plead for gratification: Oh, how necessary at such a season to redeem some part of our time for consideration, to weigh well the consequences of yielding, and suffering ourselves to become a prey to the flattering solicitations that surround us! And how honourable is his character, how high must he stand in the estimation of God, how secure is he of the final approbation of his judge, what ample provision doth he store up in his own mind for the most joyous reflections, who, in spite of all the temptations he meets with, hath the prudence and resolution to purchase and appropriate those seasons to piety, the improvement of his mind in moral habits and Christian graces, to beneficence and usefulness, to obedience to God's precepts, and *working out his own salvation*, which fools lavishly trifle away, and madmen prodigally waste in fashionable follies and vices; without daring to think what this profusion of their time will finally
reduce

reduce them to, and of the utter destruction in which it will gradually involve them. Of what infinite consequence is it to us to husband well this invaluable talent! In this, peculiarity is an argument of the best understanding. Here we can scarce be too saving and penurious. All our diligence will be well bestowed in laying it out to secure the interests of a better life, and gaining those genuine riches and pleasures, that will secure the honour, plenty, and true enjoyment of life, when those improvident consumers of it shall live, but vainly wish to die, because exposed to irremediable poverty, shame, and misery. But,

3. Lastly, this redemption of our time is an argument of the highest wisdom. *Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.* And it will appear to be so on many accounts.

If we consider the real value and intrinsic worth of it, what is there that may be laid in the ballance against it? What is there that can compensate us for the loss of it? Every moment of our time is a valuable opportunity for some worthy service, some rational enjoyment, honouring God, doing good to others, or improving ourselves. It is that one great blessing, upon which all others do absolutely depend. It is essential to life and the enjoyment of it; to share the advantages of action, and the refreshments of rest; to encrease every kind of valuable treasure, and reap the fruits of it; to store our minds with knowledge, and our hearts with worthy and generous affections; to cultivate

cultivate the disposition for happiness, and gratify the desire of it; to become acquainted with immortality, and secure a right to the reversion of it. It is capable of being improved to a thousand excellent purposes; and if there be one spare hour of our lives, that we are at a loss how to employ, the reason is; not because it is incapable of being well filled up, but because we are indisposed and unwilling to do it.

What farther shews the wisdom of immediately *redeeming our time*, is the absolute uncertainty of it. Though the worth of it be incomparably great, it is continually sliding from us. It is absolutely out of our power to command a single hour or day. It stays no man's leisure, makes no allowance for his indolence and sloth, nor waits till the season of gratification and pleasure is over. All that we can command of it is the present moment, and even that is gone before we can name it. And though we are continually flattering ourselves with distant prospects, and grasping in our imaginations many years to come; yet to how many of us may God's message to Hezekiah be applied: *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.* Isai. xxxviii. 1. Such a presumption therefore on any part of futurity, as makes us negligent and wasteful of the present moment, is the extreamest folly; because it is sacrificing the opportunity that I have actually in my hands, out of a vain and absurd dependence on somewhat distant, that probably I may never become

come the possessor of. The true use of this uncertainty is: Seize the present moment. Let us make that our own by a right application of it, and rendering it subservient to every real advantage it can procure us.

It is what every man knows, that every hour of life that is past, is irrecoverably past, and that neither heaven nor earth can recall unguarded and neglected opportunities. And here reflection and experience can only acquaint us, how great a treasure we have squandered away, without being able to assist us in the recovery of it. And of this men have been frequently sensible in those awful circumstances, where repentance itself hath been too late, and all they have been able to do, hath only been to lament their extravagance and madness, and ardently, but alas in vain, to wish the recovery and return of those opportunities, that are fled without the possibility of redemption. And the lesson we are to learn from hence is, immediately to attend to the care of our salvation and happiness, never to throw away one valuable season, because it is never to be renewed, and defer nothing of consequence to such an hereafter, as we know it is absolutely out of our power to realize, and by any means to ascertain the reversion of.

I shall only add, that the wisdom of improving our time will appear, if we consider the infinite hazard we run, and the certain dangers to which we expose ourselves by the improvident and wasteful profusion of it, and employing it for any purposes, exclusive of
I those,

those, which should ever be present to our minds, and for answering which the God of nature certainly intrusted us with it. He who disregards, and is not duly cultivated by principles and habits of a religious and moral nature, and lives only for the gratification of his appetites and passions, puts himself upon a level with the meanest of the brutes, lives the same kind of life which they do, only with a little more elegance and shew, expects to make the same sort of end, and absolutely and for ever to perish with them in the dust. But doth not such a one degrade, and strip himself of the dignity of a man? Doth he not absolutely lose all the real pleasures of rational life? Will he not be wanting in every worthy and manly improvement, and destitute of every good qualification, that can recommend him to the divine acceptance, fit him to live with rational beings, improved and perfected in moral excellency and wisdom, or enable him to relish those intellectual enjoyments, in which consists their highest happiness. And if by an habitual criminal waste of the season of the present life, men go out of it unfurnished and unfitted for the satisfactions and felicity of another; what in the nature of things, and by the appointment of God, must their condition be? All they can hope for is a sensual happiness. But such an hope is vain; all the bodily senses being dissolved by death, and the objects and manner of living in a future world being entirely different from what they are in this. Sources of rational happiness they are utterly void of. What then

then is left, but refined, exquisite, intellectual pain, that arises from poverty, shame, dishonour, sense of guilt, conviction of folly, bitter reflections on what they have lost, the impossibility of regaining it, exclusion from the society of the wiser and better beings, who have lived by principle and rule, known the design of their natures and answered it, put a due estimate on their time, and faithfully improved it; and their being forced to associate with prodigals and spendthrifts, equally perverted and ruined as themselves! Neither reason nor revelation give any ground of hope for future happiness to such as waste and abuse the season of the present life, but equally assign them to reap the effects of their extravagancy, obstinacy and folly, in an utter exclusion from all the privileges and enjoyments of that state which commences hereafter. Since therefore the mispending and loss of our time, is attended with such irreparable and substantial evils, let us act that part which prudence, interest and duty require us to act, and lay out this precious talent, whilst we are intrusted with it, for obtaining the true riches and honours, that shall stand us in everlasting stead; that when our Lord shall come, and find us thus employed, he may say to us, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into your master's joy.*

S E R M O N XX.

The Hearts of Young People demanded for God.

By the Rev. Mr. JOHN OAKES.

Preached October 6, 1742.

PROV. xxiii. 26.

My Son, give me thine Heart.—

I APPEAR here this day, my young friends, to demand you for God, and to put in his claim for your love and service. — You are desired to consider the words I have read to you as a solemn message, from the great God of heaven and earth, directed to you: conceived indeed in terms of the most endearing affection, and parental tenderness. — *My son, give me thine heart.*—O, that that God whose cause I am pleading would send me good speed this day ! And, whilst I am urging the justice and equity of his sacred demands, and the unspeakable advantage of your compliance with them, that he would be pleased himself powerfully to plead his own cause, with the vital grace and energy of his own

holy Spirit ; without which the most moving addresses of a Paul, or an Apollos, would have no suitable or lasting effect !

I confess that these words are, in the most strict and immediate sense, an address of Solomon to his son, or to any other young person whom he vouchsafes to instruct, and to whom he speaks in the tender language of a parent ; the more to express his own concern, and the better to engage their attention.— But, I hope, no one will think this is at all inconsistent with the use I propose to make of them : both because there are a great many other places of Scripture wherein such claims and demands are, indisputably, made in the name of God himself ; and especially because the regards which pious parents, or Christian ministers, or other instructors of young persons, desire and demand of them do finally aim at this, the bringing them to God.

It is with no other view, my young friends, that we desire you to give us your hearts, but only that we may engage them for God. Grant us but this, and we have our utmost wishes from you. You may therefore very justly conceive that God himself lays claim to you in the words of the text ; and you may, in effect, hear him say to you, ‘ *My son, or my daughter, give me thine heart.*’ And I hope you will not be disobedient to the divine voice, or reject him who speaketh to you from heaven. For, be it known to you that, whosoever despiseth this sacred admonition, despiseth not man, but God.

You

You must already perceive where it is I design to lay the stress of the following discourse; and that it is not my present intention, so much to urge upon you the giving your hearts to God, in opposition to hypocrisy and mere external devotion, as the giving your hearts, that is, yourselves to him, preferably to all other competitors for your affection.

You will doubtless find many courting your youthful affections, and endeavouring to engage your hearts to them; particularly the world, the flesh, and the devil, and your vain and wicked companions.—Mighty things the world promises it will do for you, if you set your heart upon that, you will have riches and honours, and I know not what abundance of good things, which it spreads before your imaginations, saying, as the Devil once did to our Saviour, *all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*, Mat. iv. 8, 9.

‘Mind your pleasures and sensual gratifications,’ saith the flesh: ‘now is your time for them; do not be so foolish as to let slip the present season; time runs away apace, and old age will insensibly creep upon you. Enjoy your pleasures whilst you may; it is time enough to think of religion hereafter.—Break off the shackles of your education, will your loose companions say, and come and live in that free and unconfined manner that we do. Why should you be confined within that narrow circle, with your grave old parents, or your ministers and teachers, have drawn round about you? Exert your spirits, and as-

‘sert your own freedom. Break through these ‘restraints of conscience, and, I know not ‘what, mere fancies and bugbears.’——Now, in the midst of these rivals for your affection, God as it were steps in, and by the ministry of his word, and the whisperings of his spirit, faith to the young creature; ‘*My son, give me thine heart.*’ Or, according to the order of the words in the original, which makes them run a little more emphatically to our present purpose, *Give, my Son, thine Heart to ME.*

Have you never found, my young friends, any such motions as these made to your consciences? I persuade myself some of you at least have. It was the voice of God within you, though it is possible you did not attend to it with that regard and obedience, which you ought to have paid to it; and that the devil, the world and the flesh, did soon erase the impression made by it, and diverted your attention to other objects. However the blessed God is so good to you, and hath so affectionate concern for your true felicity, that he renews his applications to you; and would fain prevent that misery and destruction which must be the necessary consequence of your alienating yourselves from him, (the true and only source of happiness to all reasonable creatures,) and bestowing your affections on other objects.—Behold this day is God calling to you, by his unworthy servant, that is now ministring before you (O! that you would hear and obey the divine call!) *my son, give me thine heart.*

Now

Now as it is a matter of vast consequence, both to present and eternal welfare, on whom you bestow your hearts, and as beside the blessed God there are other rivals for your affections, such as I have above-mentioned; let me entreat you not to dispose of yourselves rashly and foolishly, but weigh the matter soberly and carefully in your own thoughts. And, in order to assist your determinations upon this point (the giving of your hearts,) let me desire you to consider seriously and carefully these two things; viz.—Who hath the greatest claim to your hearts;—And where you can bestow them to the greatest advantage.—Upon these the ensuing discourse will turn.—And if it shall appear upon examination, (as I doubt not but it will) that the blessed God hath the fullest and fairest claim to your hearts, and that you cannot dispose of yourselves any where else with equal advantage; I hope you will then, with pleasure, resign yourselves up into his hands, and consecrate your hearts to his love and service through Jesus Christ.

I. The first thing proposed, as the subject of consideration in the present case, is, who hath the greatest claim to your hearts.

Sit down, my young friends, and turn this matter a little over in your own minds.—

Here, say you, I am surrounded with various competitors for this heart of mine. The blessed God demands me for himself; and the Lord Jesus Christ claims my heart: and under them my Christians, parents, ministers, and instructors, desire me to give them my heart, that they may engage it

' for God and the redeemer, whose cause and
 ' interest they profess to plead. On the other
 ' hand, sin, and Satan, the world and the flesh,
 ' and with them some gay companions, urge
 ' me to bestow my heart upon them.—What
 ' shall I do in the case? Why, examine the
 ' merits of their respective pretensions, and so-
 ' berly consider who hath the justest and most
 ' equitable claim to thy affections.—Behold,
 ' saith the great God, my hands hath made thee
 ' and fashioned thee, and I breathed into thee
 ' the breath of life, and made thee a living and
 ' a reasonable soul. *All souls are mine; as the*
 ' *soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is*
 ' *mine*, Ezek. xviii. 4. and as I gave thee be-
 ' ing at first, so my visitation hath preserved
 ' thy spirit, and upheld thy soul in life ever
 ' since. Thou hast lived upon the provisions
 ' of my bounty, and by the care of my watch-
 ' ful providence over thee, hast thou been pre-
 ' served from innumerable evils, that have been
 ' round about thee. I am the great father of
 ' spirits, and they are all my offspring; and
 ' I bear a paternal love and affection for the
 ' work of my hands; and as such call thee
 ' my Son, and demand filial love and obedi-
 ' ence from thee! How often hast thou pro-
 ' voked me with thy sins? and I have bore
 ' with thy transgressions; and instead of de-
 ' stroying thee, as I could easily have done
 ' in a moment, have with much long suffering
 ' waited to be gracious to thee! nay I sent
 ' my only begotten Son to redeem and
 ' save thee, when fallen into a state of sin
 ' and misery, to redeem and save thee by dy-
 ' ing

‘ing himself for thee, to make attonement
‘for thy transgressions.—Thou owest me
‘therefore thine heart, and all that thou hast.
‘These my demands from thee, are such as
‘thy own conscience tells thee are indisputably
‘just and equal, *give me, therefore, thine heart!*’

In like manner, the redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, puts in his claim, and says ; ‘I left
‘the bosom of my father, and united myself
‘to flesh and blood, that I might be capable of
‘suffering and dying for thee, to recover and
‘save thee when thou wast lost. Read the
‘greatness of my affection for thee, and the
‘zeal of my heart for thy Salvation, in the
‘pains and agonies I submitted to undergo for
‘thy sake, in order to reconcile thee to God,
‘and restore thee to the divine favour, in which
‘all thy happiness is bound up. And wilt
‘thou not give me thine heart, which I have
‘purchased at so dear a rate, and at the price
‘of my own precious blood?’

Your pious parents, your ministers, and teachers, only desire you to consider the equity and reasonableness of these demands of God, and the redeemer ; and endeavour to urge them upon you, with all the tenderness and all the persuasive force we can, from a thorough conviction of the justness of them, and a solicitous concern for your welfare in both worlds.

And now think on the other hand, what pretensions the devil, or the world, or the flesh, have to lay claim to your hearts.—In effect, none at all ; none that will bear even the

slightest examination of a thinking mind. — Did they make you? — No. Did they redeem you? — No. Have you lived upon the fruits of their bounty, or been preserved by their vigilant care over you? — No. What have they done for you, or what can they do for you without God? — They deceive, they ensnare, they corrupt, they defile you, they molest and trouble you; but neither will nor can make you happy. — And is it upon such grounds as these they lay claim to my love and homage (should you say, not without indignation?) Will they presume to demand my heart preferably to the blessed God? — What madness must it be in me to admit such sorry pretensions, and to resign my heart to such shadowy claims! No, to thee, O blessed God! do I devote and consecrate my self; I acknowledge the justice and equity of thy demands. I clearly perceive thy right and title to this heart of mine; and to thee, through Jesus Christ the great redeemer that bought me with his precious blood, do I here willingly and chearfully resign it. And had I more to give it should all be thine; for *of thee, and through thee, and to thee are all things; and thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.* — Depart from me therefore all ye wicked doers, I will keep the commandments of my God. His I am, and Him will I serve, — I hope therefore my young friends, you are convinced that, in point of right and just claim to your hearts, no one has or can possibly have

preten=

pretensions equal to those of the blessed God. And should you not *render unto God the things that are indisputably God's*? Consider further,

II. Where you may bestow your hearts, i. e. yourselves, with the greatest advantage.

And here I acknowledge the world, and the flesh and such like rivals, of the blessed God for your affection, have a little more to say for themselves than under the former head. Right and title they have none at all; and if they have fraudently taken possession of your hearts, they should be treated as usurpers, and turned out of their illegal possessions.——But, however this be, they pretend that they will do mighty things for you; and that it will be very much for your interest and advantage to be of their side. ‘You will enjoy a life of pleasure and ease, free from the restraints and shackles of religion. You will have an unbounded liberty of conduct, and withhold your eyes from no joy. Whereas the services of religion, say they, are irksome and melancholy, and hinder men from rising in the world, and often times expose them to a great deal of suffering and pain, which you may otherwise escape.’——These, and a great many other things of a like nature will be insinuated to you, to turn away your hearts from God, and engage them to the flesh, and the world. And sad experience convinces us of the unhappy effect of such insinuations, upon the generality of younger minds. They greedily swallow the tempting bait, and perceive not the fatal hook that is underneath.

May

May divine grace preserve you, my dear young friends, from being thus ensnared and taken!

And in order to your preservation, let me desire your attention to these two things, which I would beg leave to offer to you upon this head. 1. First—We will suppose at present, that the world and the flesh, are able to make good their specious promises.

This will not indeed be granted them (as we shall see presently,) but we are now to reason upon this supposition; which is allowing them all the advantage they can possibly desire. We will then, for a while, suppose that if you follow the dictates of the world, and the flesh, and pursue their counsels before those of God and religion, you will live in ease and pleasure all your days, be rich and honourable, *be clothed in fine linnen, and fare sumptuously every day*, and in short, enjoy as much as your carnal hearts can wish.—Delightful scenes! you will say: Yes; but then, how long are they to last? will they not soon be over and gone?—Human life is circumscribed within very narrow limits. Death will come and spread a dark veil over all these scenes of pleasure, and make an eternal separation between them and you, and what a case are you then in! What is to become of your immortal souls? You are to enter into another world, and to appear at the bar of God, to give an account of your conduct, and to receive from his lips a sentence that will determine your everlasting state. And can you expect to hear, from the mouth of your Judge, any other sentence than, *Depart from*

from me, ye cursed, into the regions of eternal misery? ‘Had you given me your hearts, I would
‘now have opened the kingdom of heaven to
‘you, and given you a portion in the ever-
‘lasting pleasures of it. But you chose to
‘have *your good things in life*; now therefore,
‘reap the fruits of your foolish choice.’

And is it then worth while, my friends, to purchase the short lived transitory pleasures of sin at so dear a rate as this? Can you deliberately consent to give up your part in the felicities of heaven, and to be miserable in hell for ever, provided you may but enjoy some few days or years of sensual pleasures here on earth? Surely you cannot. And yet this is the very utmost of what the world, and the flesh, can or do promise to bestow upon you. Only they labour to hide from you the frightful consequences that are like to follow; which, however, it is not in their power to prevent.

You have a lively picture of the case I have been speaking of, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 19, &c. There you see a rich man *cloathed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously, every day.*—Well, but wait a little while, and you find he *dies and is buried*:——and there is a final end of all his pleasures.——For the next thing you hear of him is, that he is *in Hell, lifting up his eyes in torments, and begging for a drop of water to cool his enflamed tongue*; and fixed down to those regions of sorrow for ever.

Methinks such a frightful image as this, is enough to deter you from harkening to the flatter-
ing

tering propofals of the world, and to make you reject them with fcorn and indignation. ' Let
 ' a life of fenfe be ever fo fweet, fhall I chufe
 ' it, when I know hell follows it? Or let a
 ' life of piety be ever fo troublefome and dif-
 ' ficult, yet the happy confequences of it in a
 ' future ftate render it far more eligible than
 the other.' Who would not rather be with
 Lazarus, begging his bread at the rich man's
 door, and afterwards be carried by the angels
 into Abraham's bofom; than partake of all
 the dainties of the rich man's table, and then
 fhare in his dreadful fate?

Thus then you fee, that fuppoſing the world,
 and the fleſh, were able to make good to the
 utmoſt of their flattering promiſes to you, by
 which they endeavour to beguile your hearts,
 and eſtrange them from God and religion, that
 even then it would be the greateſt madneſs for
 you to beſtow your hearts on them, and with-
 hold them from God. *For the wages of ſin is
 death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through
 Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, Rom. vi. 23.* But then,
 2. Secondly, even with regard to this pre-
 ſent life, the advantage is far from being ſo
 much on their ſide, as they would make you
 believe.

On the contrary, I am firmly perſwaded that
the ways of religion are ways of pleaſantneſs,
 as well as it's end *peace.* And except the caſe
 of perſecution (of which I ſhall ſpeak preſently)
 I am ſatisfied that the ſervants of God do, ordi-
 narily, lead eaſier and pleaſanter lives, than thoſe
 that are ſtrangers and enemies to the principles
 and

and precepts of religion. For, besides those spiritual and divine pleasures which arise, from the intercourse of the soul with God in acts of worship and devotion, from the testimony of an approving conscience, and the hopes of the divine approbation, and the prospects of eternal felicity in a future state (which whosoever hath experienced would not, I dare say, exchange for all the delights of the sons of men;) besides, I say, all the pleasures and comforts of this kind, which the servants of God enjoy, there is nothing truly valuable or desirable, even in this life, which they do not stand at least as fair to partake of, as any other person whatsoever.

Is not religion very friendly to the health of our bodies, and generally, to our reputation, and good name in the world? Is it any obstacle to industry in your callings, or to success in the common affairs, and business in life? *Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour. It is health to the navel, and marrow to the bones, Prov. iii. 8, 16. They that honour me, says God, I will honour, 1 Sam. ii. 30. The blessing of the Lord, maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it, Prov. x. 22.* And even as to those low things the gratifications of sensual appetite, we are indulged within the bounds of reason and prudence; which is as far as any wise man would ever desire.

The insinuations therefore, that religion will make you unhappy, are mere calumnies that stand confuted by a thousand experiences to the

the contrary. We may eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart, if we can hope that God accepteth our works, and that we are in a state of peace and friendship with Him through Jesus Christ, Eccles. ix. 7.

It is, for the most part, sin that makes men miserable; either their own sin, or the sin of others. How many instances have you known of poor creatures, that have sunk down into the most abject circumstances in life, been oppressed with pains and shame, poverty and nakedness, and gone about the streets spectacles of horror and wretchedness, purely through their own vices and wickedness. The world sets before your eyes a few darling images of external pomp and shew, and grandeur; but it labours to conceal from you the many miserable creatures, that die martyrs in its wretched cause. And suffer me to inform you, that there is many a man thoroughly miserable within, that makes a great and gay show without. Could you see the cares and fears, the disquietudes and vexations, that corrode his breast, and prey continually upon his heart, you would be very far from thinking him an object of envy, and would rather take him for an object of pity.

The devil, the world, and the flesh, promise you indeed riches, honours, and abundance of pleasures; but they promise what it is not in their power to give. Even these temporal enjoyments are dispensed by the overruling providence of an Almighty God; and without his leave you cannot enjoy the meanest comfort. But if you give him your hearts,
and

and devote yourselves to him, he will certainly bestow as much of these things upon you as his infinite wisdom knows to be best for you. And if he sees it fit to give you only a little of this world, that *little*, sweetned and sanctified by his blessing, will be *better than the treasures of many wicked*, and yield you more satisfaction and content, Psal. xxxvii. 16.

And then, under the various troubles which human life is exposed to, it must be evident that he that hath a God to go to, and to put his hope and trust in, and who by faith and prayer can cast all his cares upon him; must be in a far happier situation, than the children of this world can possibly be. For what have they to support and comfort them under the calamities of Life, or to whom can they look for relief and help?

And thus you see, that even with regard to the real Pleasures and Comforts of this Life in the common and ordinary course of providence, the advantages does not lie on the side of sin and the world, as they would persuade you; but rather on the side of religion and piety.

And if the case of persecution be objected, we have this to say; that, thanks be to God, this is not the common and universal lot of good men, at least not in any great or sore degree: and if we are called out to it, we shall have pleasures and comforts of another kind, which will more than balance those we may be deprived of. *If our sufferings for Christ should abound, our consolations also shall abound through Him.* 2 Cor. i. 5. So that we shall

be able to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, as the believing Hebrews did, Heb. x. 34. and even embrace a stake for the name of Christ, with more transport and satisfaction, than others sit down to the richest entertainments of sense.

What I have here said is not a mere flight of fancy, but what the experience of the glorious army of martyrs, for the cause of Christ and truereligion, will abundantly support and justify.

To sum up what hath been said under this head;—You are supposed to be setting down, and enquiring where you may bestow your hearts to the greatest advantage to yourselves; and particularly weighing and examining the specious proposals of sin and the world, in opposition to those of God and piety. And here you see, that if it be granted that you should enjoy the full of all that is promised of worldly pleasures, and sensual delights, that yet the end of these things will be destruction and eternal death. Whereas the end and issue of a course of devotedness to God, however uncomfortable it be supposed at present, will most certainly be eternal life.—And then further, it hath been shewn, that, according to the common and ordinary course of things, the servants of sin and the world are far from engrossing to themselves all the pleasures and comforts even of this present life; the advantage, upon the whole, lying greatly on the side of virtue and religion. And since, therefore, (partly in this world, but most eminently and triumphantly in that which is to come) the cause of piety hath the advantage, and as you cannot but perceive

ceive that it hath so, you will be inexcusably foolish, and blind to your own interest, if you do not *give your hearts to God.*—And in his name, I again demand them for him, who has the justest claim and title to them; and to whom you may dispose of them with infinitely greater advantage, than it is possible for you to do any where else. *Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,* 1 Tim. iv. 8, 9.

A P P L I C A T I O N.

And now, my young friends, since it is apparently both your duty, and your interest, to give your hearts to God, as I hope you are convinced that it is from what hath been here said to you: suffer me to beseech you to act agreeably to the present conviction of your minds: and now, even now, without delay, to make a solemn surrender of your hearts into his hands through Jesus Christ the great mediator. Now, *in the days of your youth, so remember your Creator,* and Redeemer as to devote your hearts, i. e. yourselves to them. And in order to engage you so to do, let me desire your attention to the few following motives, additional to what has been above suggested.

I. This will be particularly acceptable to God and the Redeemer.

I remember, saith God, concerning Israel of old, the kindness of thy youth, Jer. ii. 12.

And wisdom, in the book of Proverbs, is introduced saying, *I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me*; Prov. viii. 17. They, of all others, shall be sure to do so. In the case of the young man that came enquiring *what he should do to inherit eternal life*, the very circumstance of his youth seems to have had some influence to draw out our blessed Saviour's love to him; Mark x. 21. *Then Jesus beholding him loved him*. Now, therefore, my young friends, is the season wherein the surrendering your hearts to God will be peculiarly pleasing to him. And therefore I beseech you embrace it; don't let slip the golden opportunity.

And suffer me to add, under this head, that, as at this time of day there are so few young persons looking towards God, and seeking the way to the heavenly Zion, (the pleasures and interests of the world ingrossing their hearts) so, if, in such a situation, you would not follow a multitude to do evil, but chuse the almost forsaken paths of piety and virtue, God will put a distinguishing honour upon you, and embrace you with the marks of peculiar affection, and endearment. Moreover,

2. It will be singularly comfortable and advantageous to yourselves.

How many sins, and how many sorrows, will you hereby prevent! What a foundation will you lay for the most happy acquaintance with God, and joyfull communion with him all your days! What a happy proof will it afford you of your sincerity, and of your con-

sequent acceptance with God, that, in early life and when the temptations of the world, and the flesh were strongest, you deliberately chose the service of God, and gave your hearts to him, preferably to every other competitor ! How easy may you be in your own minds, trusting in God to be the guide of your youth, and to dispose of you into those circumstances in life which will, upon the whole be best for you ! With what pleasure does Obadiah tell the prophet Elijah, *I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth !* 1 Kings xviii. 12. And, if God spare your lives, you are like to be qualified for eminent usefulness in the world, according to the places and stations where providence may cast your lot ; or, if you die sooner, you will be happily prepared to meet death, and bid it welcome.

3. If you refuse God your hearts now, perhaps hereafter it will be too late to offer them.

Life, you know, is very uncertain ; and young persons dye, as well as old. And, whilst you are putting off from day to day, your attention to the great affairs of religion, and of making your peace with God through Jesus Christ, by surrendering your hearts to him ; death may unexpectedly surprise you, and prevent your ever doing it at all. And how terrible will that be !——But, if your lives are continued, is it at all likely that you will have any better inclinations to this service, after you have estranged yourselves further from God ? It will be very distinguishing grace in God if it

should be so.—Or how can you hope that he will be equally inclinable to accept you?—Since, therefore, you cannot reasonably depend on future time, or, if you should live to see it, are like to be no better disposed towards God, or to have God more favourably inclined to you, but rather the reverse; what a moving consideration should this be to engage you to give your hearts to God, even now, without delay!

4: Consider what the refusal of your hearts to God implies in it.

You do, in effect, say, ‘ I dislike the service of God; I disown his title to me; I can place my affections on better and more deserving objects; I desire to have nothing to do with God.’—This is the plain language of such a conduct. And can you bear the thought of adopting it for your own? and though you may, at the same time, amuse yourselves with the projects of bestowing your hearts upon God some while hence, this is only a mere shift to pacify the remonstrances of your consciences; and, at the very best, amounts only to this; ‘ I will dishonour God, and wound my own soul, yet a little longer; and after this I will be sorry for what I have done, and beg his pardon.’—And if this be not acting contrary to all the rules of reason and common sense, it is hard to say what is so.

Lastly, Think how you will answer your refusal at the great day.

What can you possibly have to say for yourselves? It will not be a time to turn off the matter with a jest and a sneer, as some may do now.

now. The solemn appearance, and the awful issue, of that day will strike every heart, that is not given to God, with terror. You will not be able to say, your hearts were not demanded for God; or that you was never put in mind of his claim to you. You know you have repeated admonitions on this head; and that now, this day in particular, your hearts have been demanded for God, and the Redeemer.

Will you be able to offer to the great judge any sufficient reason, or any tolerable excuse, why you did not give him your hearts? Had any one else a fairer claim to them? or did they bid higher for your love than God did? Did they offer you any thing greater or better than eternal life? — ‘ This I would now have bestowed upon you, had you given your hearts to me. But, since you have refused all my calls and proposals, depart from my presence, ye workers of iniquity, I know you not; lie down in the sparks of your own kindling with sorrow for ever.’ — Believe me, these are not idle dreams, but certain and awful truths. And you may assure yourselves that God will call you to judgment.

May I hope that you are now affected with these motives, and disposed and resolved, through the strength of divine grace, to give your hearts to God? — But because I am very desirous to fix your hearts for him, and know not how to leave you without gaining my point, (not knowing whether I shall have another opportunity of speaking thus particularly to you about

the matter) let me address a word or two to you, according to the various circumstances and situations you may be in. These I might diversify into a great many particulars; but I will confine myself to speak briefly to the following.

1. Many of you have the happiness of descending from religious parents, and have enjoyed the benefit of a pious education.

And shall not you give your hearts to God? Has he proved a barren wilderness to your parents; or given them cause to repent themselves that ever they entered into his service? Had that been the case, why are they so solicitous to engage you for God, and *travail again in birth till Christ be formed in you*? Why have they, some of them, upon their dying beds bore an honourable testimony for God, and with their latest breath charged you to *know the God of your parents, and to serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind*? From whence may God most reasonably expect a succession of servants, but from the families of those who were themselves devoted to him, and brought up their household in his faith and fear? And will you also go away?—Will you cut off the entail of divine blessings from your descendants? Your defection will be particularly resented by God. As on the other hand, the tender of your hearts to the God of your fathers will be sure to meet with the most gracious acceptance.

2. It may have been the unhappiness of some of you to have had wicked and irreligious parents,

parents, that bestowed little or no care or pains to instruct you in the principles of piety and virtue, and to engage your hearts to God.

Much will such ungodly parents have to answer for another day. But do not you imagine that you will incur no blame by walking in their steps, especially when you are grown up to some years of maturity, and have by some favourable providence or other, an opportunity of being better instructed. And if you find the grace of God inclining you to attend to the counsels of religion, and to devote your hearts to God, the wickedness of your parents shall be no bar to your acceptance; see *Isai. lvi. 6, 7.* God will receive and bless you through Jesus Christ, and adopt you into the number of his children; and may possibly make you an instrument, in his hands, of awakening serious impressions on the minds of your parents themselves, and so of saving their souls also. How pleasing the thought! Thus the curse of God, that is entailed on the families of the wicked, will be happily cut off in you, and a line of blessing succeed in its room.

3. I trust some of you have already given your hearts to God, and made an early choice of him as your God in Jesus Christ,

To you, my friends, I would say; be very thankful for the grace of God that hath given you this happy turn and disposition: and cleave with purpose of heart to the Lord all your days. You see, from what hath been said, that you have made a wise choice, and such as it is impossible you should ever have reason to repent

of. But, remember, it is not enough to begin well, but you must continue, and persevere in a course of piety and devotedness to God, His claims continue always in full force, and the advantages and rewards of his service will be continually growing. If you leave your first love, and wickedly depart from God, you will grievously provoke him, and wound your own souls. *It would have been better for you never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after you have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto you, 2 Pet. ii. 21.—*

In order to prevent your doing so, let me give you this piece of advice. Do not satisfy yourselves with a mere sudden flash of affection, urging you to make some sort of surrender of yourselves to God, and trust to that, as if this were alone sufficient to recommend you to him, and secure your final salvation; as if the great business of religion was then done and over. But weigh the matter calmly, deliberately, and frequently, in your own minds; endeavour to get just notions of God, and the doctrines and duties of religion; for want of which, some, that seem very piously disposed in their younger days, have afterwards turned apostates, or run into the grossest errors or mistakes, troubling the world, the church and themselves.

4 Some of you, I would hope, find yourselves disposed, in consequence of what you have now heard, to surrender your hearts to God.

And

And I beseech you, as you love your souls, that you would not go about to suppress or divert the present disposition, but fall in with it and yield your hearts to God. Go, and humbly give to God the hearts he claims. Put them into the hands of Jesus Christ, to be purified, sanctified, illuminated, washed and cleansed; that they may become acceptable to God. Adore that grace, which allows such poor worms as we are to present our hearts to God; and his condescending goodness, which, in Christ Jesus, will graciously accept them. Why should you either demur, or delay, in so plain and so important a case? Perhaps you may never have another call from God, or another invitation. Embrace therefore the present, and through Jesus Christ now yield yourselves to God, to be his, in the bonds of an everlasting covenant. You know not what irreparable mischief you may do yourselves, if, like Felix touched and moved with the preaching of the apostle Paul, you say to your convictions, as he did to that apostle, *Go your way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for you*, Acts xxiv. 25. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.*

Lastly, I suppose there may be others of you that, after all that had been said, remain unmoved, indifferent to God, or averse to him.

But think, I beseech you, what is like to be the issue of such a temper. What! do you care for none of these things? Is it nothing to you what becomes of you for ever? Even your present worldly interests are some way concerned

concerned in the affair under consideration ; and your future eternal interests are much more so. Awake thou that sleepest, and rouse thyself out of thy shameful indolence in a matter that concerns thy everlasting all ! —But if you are not only meerly cold and indifferent to God, but even averse to him, this is still more shocking. What ! averse to God, the fountain of all good, the light, the life, and happiness of souls ! What a sad complection of soul is this ! And how terrible must the issue be, if it be persisted in ! —To whom will you give your hearts, if you refuse them to God ? You will one day sorrowfully remember your present stupidity, or aversion, when either the grace of God shall awaken you to repentance, or the flames of hell convince you of your intolerable folly and madness.

I might now subjoin several particular inferences, or reflections, which would offer themselves to our consideration upon this subject ; such as these that follow, which I shall just mention, but must not allow myself to enlarge on.

——The strange degeneracy and corruption of the heart of man, that can stand out against the plainest reasons, and the strongest motives.

——For such undoubtedly are those which God uses to engage our hearts to himself. And yet how great a part of mankind, even of those that have these reasons and motives spread before them, remain still stupid and unimpressed ? ——

——The

—The necessity of divine grace to move and incline your hearts aright, and to give them a holy and religious turn and disposition.—

—The necessity and importance of prayer to God through Jesus Christ, for the needful influences of his grace and spirit, to form our own hearts, and those of others, to piety and goodness.—

—The benefit and advantage of suitable admonitions and instructions in the days of our youth, to check the vanity of our minds, and to guard them against the flattering insinuations of the world, and the flesh; and to put us in mind of the claims which God and the Redeemer have to our hearts, and the unspeakably greater happiness we shall have in disposing of ourselves to them, than we can possibly expect any where else.—

These and several other reflections I might usefully insist on; which at present I have only mentioned, and must leave the enlargement to your own minds.

I shall conclude with a very moving passage, taken from the writings of the late reverend and excellent Mr. Howe. It is at the conclusion of his two sermons on *yielding ourselves to God*. After having urged a great many considerations, and motives to engage his hearers to this service, he thus finishes his address:

—‘ And were you now to give an account
‘ where you have been to day; and what you
‘ have been doing: If you say, you have been
‘ engaging this day in a solemn treaty with the
‘ Lord of heaven and earth, about yielding
‘ your-

' yourselves to him : and it be further asked ;
 ' Well, and what was the issue ? Have you
 ' agreed ? Must you, any of you, be obliged by
 ' the truth of the case to say, No ; Astonish-
 ' ing answer ! What ! hast thou been treating
 ' with the great God, the God of thy life, and
 ' not agreed ! What, man ! did he demand of
 ' thee any unreasonable thing ?—Only to yield
 ' myself.—Why, that was the most reasonable
 ' thing in all the world.—Wretched crea-
 ' ture ! whither now wilt you go ? What wilt
 ' thou do with thyself ? Where wilt thou lay
 ' thy hated head ?——But if you can say,
 ' blessed be God I gladly agreed to the pro-
 ' posal ; he gave me the grace not to deny
 ' him ;——Then may it be said, this was a
 ' good day's work ; and you will have cause
 ' to bless God for this day as long as you have
 ' a day to live.'

S E R M O N XXI.

Counsels of Prudence for the Use of
Young People.

By the Rev. Mr. LARDNER.

MATTH. x. 16.

*Behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of
wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and
harmless as doves.*

THIS advice is found among those directions, which our blessed Lord gave his disciples, when he sent them from him upon a commission in his lifetime here on earth. *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying: Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. Matt. x. 5—8.*

It is reasonable to conclude, that the disciples received this commission with much pleasure
and

and satisfaction, accounting it a great honour done them, and conceiving at the same time fond expectations of honour and acceptance wherever they came. They were to carry with them very joyful and desirable tidings, that *the kingdom of Heaven was at hand*: they were empowered to confer very great benefits, and were required to do all *freely*, without receiving any gratuity. The limitation in their commission could not but be a high recommendation of it: the good news was to be published to Jews, and them only; not to Gentiles, nor to Samaritans.

But our Lord thought not fit to dismiss them without some particular counsels and directions, which would be of use to them now, but especially hereafter; when their commission should receive an enlargement, both with regard to the subject matter of their message, and the persons to whom they were to carry it. And he judged it needful to give them some hints of a different reception from what they thought of, and some cautions to be upon their guard; that they might not afford any just ground for misconstructions or injurious reflections, nor do any thing that should tend to draw upon themselves a disagreeable treatment. He therefore tells them: *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.* “ You mean well yourselves, and you think well of others. But I must forewarn you, that many, to whom you are going, have selfish and malicious dispositions, and are subtle and artful. For which reason you are to be cautious and prudent :

“dent: *Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and
“harmless as doves.* Maintaining your present
“innocence and integrity, decline dangers as
“much as possible, and take care not to give
“any ground for reflection upon your conduct.”

This advice then of our Saviour to his disciples will give me just occasion to recommend some rules and directions of prudent conduct and behaviour to those who are entering upon the stage of action in the world. In doing which I shall take this method.

I. I shall represent the nature of prudence.
II. I shall shew the necessity, grounds and reasons of prudence.

III. I intend to lay down some rules and directions concerning a prudent conduct, with regard both to our words and actions.

I. I shall represent the nature of prudence. In general, it is a discerning and employing the most proper means of obtaining those ends, which we propose to ourselves. He who aims at his own advancement is prudent, if he contrives a good scheme for that purpose, and then puts in practise the several parts of it with diligence and discretion. If the end aimed at be the good and welfare of others, in any particular respect; then prudence lyes in taking those methods, which are most likely to promote the advantage of those persons, and in doing that in the way least prejudicial to ourselves, and most consistent with our own safety.

It is an important branch of prudence to avoid faults. One false step sometimes ruins, or however greatly embarrasses and retards a good

good design. Therefore prudent conduct depends more on great caution and circumspection than great abilities. A bright genius is necessary for producing a fine composition. Courage and presence of mind are needful for a hazardous undertaking: but circumspection alone, such caution as secures against errors and faults, makes up a great part of prudent conduct, by preventing many evils and inconveniences.

Prudence likewise supposeth the maintaining of innocence and integrity. We may not neglect our duty to avoid danger. The principal wisdom is to approve ourselves to God, and it is better to suffer any temporal evil, than incur the divine displeasure. These disciples of Christ were to go out and preach saying: *The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* That was the work assigned them by their Lord and master, which therefore it was their duty to perform, and they could by no means decline. But they might do it in the way, which would least expose them to inconveniences, and was most likely to secure acceptance for their message and themselves. This is prudence.

We are not out of a pretence of discretion to desert the cause of truth. But we are to espouse it with safety, if we can; that is, maintain it in the way least offensive to others, and least dangerous to ourselves.

Nor have we a right from any rules of prudence to use unlawful methods to obtain our end. Our end is supposed to be good, and the means must be so likewise. Thus far of the nature of Prudence.

II. I would now shew the necessity, grounds and reasons of Prudence. These are chiefly the wickedness and weakness of men. The former is the reason, which our Lord refers to. *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents.* It is upon this ground likewise, that St. Paul recommends the practice of prudent caution: *see then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* Eph. v. 15, 16. Some men are malicious and designing enemies to truth and virtue, and to all that are hearty friends of either. Good men therefore are obliged to be upon their guard, and make use of some methods of defence and security. Others are weak and simple, and therefore liable to be misled and imposed upon by the insinuations of the subtle and malicious.

Nay, if there were no bad men, yet there would be need of prudent behaviour, because some who have not much reflection or experience are apt to put wrong constructions upon harmless actions.

This leads us somewhat further into the nature of Prudence, and to observe a particular, which could not be so well taken notice of, before we had observed this ground and reason of it. For a great part of Prudence lies in denying ourselves, so as to keep some way within the limits of virtue. A good man, if all about him were wise and good, might be secure in his innocence alone. It might then be sufficient to mean well, and to pursue directly the good ends he has in view, without doing any

harm in the prosecution of them. But now, on account of the weakness of some, he must not only be innocent, but he must also obviate misconstructions and misrepresentations.

We may perceive this in an instance or two. Our Saviour directs his disciples at the 11. ver. of this chapter: *Into whatsoever city or town ye enter, enquire who is worthy, and there abide till ye go thence.* This is more particularly expressed in another gospel: *In the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: go not from house to house.* Luke x. 7. They had not then in the eastern countries houses of publick entertainment. And it was usual for men of good dispositions, such as our Lord terms *worthy*, to entertain strangers. The disciples were sent two and two. They were not to make a long abode in any place, and would not be thought burdensome by any that were *worthy*, or hospitable men. But our Lord charges them *not to go from house to house*, or remove from the place they had first resorted to. This perhaps might be sometimes done very reasonably. But our Lord does now in a manner absolutely restrain his disciples from acting thus, whatever some others might do; that they might not give any the least ground of suspicion, or insinuation, that they were curious about their entertainment.

It was upon this principle that the apostle Paul went yet farther, and in some places, particularly in Greece, waved his right to a subsistence from those he taught, as he observes to the Corinthians: *if others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless*

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we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the Gospel of Christ. 1 Cor. ix. 12. Again: though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I might gain the more. ver. 19. This rule he observed also at Thessalonica: For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travel: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God. 1 Theff. ii. 9.

I have now given you a view of the nature of Prudence, and the reasons it.

III. In the next place I am to lay down some rules and directions concerning a prudent conduct, with regard to our words and actions.

This is indeed a work of some niceness and delicacy, and is most properly reserved for men of distinguished characters. There is likewise oftentimes a backwardness in men to pay any deference to directions of this kind, except they are delivered by men of large experience, and of great renown for wisdom. For this reason, as it seems, Solomon in his book of Proverbs, containing excellent rules of Virtue and Prudence, thought fit to introduce Wisdom herself proclaiming her kind intentions to mankind, and delivering many of those directions, that men might be the better induced to hearken to them. And when he was about to publish some remarks upon the world, and the affairs of men in it, he aggrandises his own character, and sets it off to the best advantage; giving himself the title of *the Preacher*, or *Collector*; one who had been long and carefully employed in laying

up a store of just and useful observations; and who had good opportunities for that purpose, as he was *king in Jerusalem*: Eccl. i. 1. affirming likewise, that he had *given his heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under Heaven*; that he had *seen all the works that are done under the sun*, and that his *heart had great experience in wisdom and knowledge*, ver. 12—16.

As we have before us for our guidance the observations of those who have been eminent for wisdom, and whose character is well established in the world; it may be presumed, that all these high qualifications are not now requisite for a performance of this nature. And I would hope, that they, for whom the following directions are chiefly intended, are already so wise, or so well disposed at least, as to be willing to hearken to good Counsel from any one who means them well. It will be my care to deliver such rules of Prudence, as have been approved and recommended by those who have had a knowledge of the world, and are esteemed good judges of mankind. And I shall generally support the rules laid down by reasons, which if they do not convince, the Counsel itself may be the less regarded.

Rules of this sort are very numerous, and have been often given, as many are in the book of Proverbs, without connection or dependence on each other. I shall propose those I mention in the following method: First, I shall observe some general rules of Prudence; and then some particular directions relating to business, civil
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conversation in the world, more intimate friendship and private relations ; lastly, usefulness to others.

First, I shall mention some general rules of Prudence. The preservation of our integrity in acting strictly according to the rules of religion and virtue will not be allowed a place among these rules. However, (as has been already shewn,) it ought to be supposed. Our blessed Lord does not omit the innocence of the dove, when he recommends the wisdom of the serpent. I must therefore again desire it may be observed, that nothing I am about to say is to be understood as inconsistent with integrity ; which, though not properly a rule of Prudence, is oftentimes of advantage, and is both a means of security, and adds weight and influence to a man's character. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely, but he that perverteth his way shall be known.* Prov. x. 9. Again : *in the way of righteousness there is life, and in the path way thereof there is no death.* chap. xii. 28. Moreover, *the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* chap. iv. 18. Though virtuous and upright men should for a while lye in obscurity, they may shine hereafter with a greater lustre. And, which is above all external considerations and advantages of this present world, virtue is of the highest importance to the inward peace of the mind, and our everlasting happiness in the world to come. Supposing then a strict regard to uprightness of heart, and innocence of behaviour ;

1. The first rule of Prudence I lay down is this, that we should endeavour to know ourselves. He that knows not himself may undertake designs he is not fit for, and can never accomplish, in which he must therefore necessarily meet with disappointment. Nor can any man have comfort and satisfaction in an employment that is unsuitable to his temper.

Beside a knowledge of our own genius, temper and inclination, it is needful, that we should be also possessed of a just idea of our outward circumstance and condition, and the relation we bear to persons about us. It is one branch of Prudence for a man to behave agreeably to his own particular character. If he mistakes that, he will be guilty of many improprieties. But a just discernment of our own circumstances, and of our relation to other men, will make way for an agreeable and acceptable deportment.

The knowledge of yourselves will prevent conceit on the one hand, and meanness of spirit and conduct on the other. You will readily act with that modest assurance, which becomes your birth, estate, age, station, abilities, skill and other advantages; without departing from your just right, or assuming more than ought to be reasonably allowed you.

2. Endeavour to know other men. It is a point of charity to hope the best of every man, and of Prudence to fear the worst. Not that these are inconsistent. It would be to misrepresent a Christian virtue extremely to suppose, that it obliged us to trust men without any

knowledge of them. We are to hope and suppose of every man, that he is good and honest, till we have some proof to the contrary. This is the judgment of charity. But we are not bound to employ men, or confide in them, till we have some positive evidences of their honesty and capacity for the trust we would commit to them, or the work in which we would employ them.

Some men are unreasonably suspicious and jealous. Because they are bad themselves, or because they have had dealings with some that are so, they have formed a notion that all men are false and unfaithful. This is a wicked extreme. They who are in it are fitly punished for so disadvantageous and unjust an opinion of their fellow-creatures. Such must needs become contemptible themselves. They may be safe, but they can never make any figure in society; it being, I suppose, impossible for one man alone to carry on any important design, or do any thing considerable in any business or profession. There is therefore a necessity of mutual confidence among men.

On the other hand, some good men are apt to think, that all other men are so. This is oftentimes the sentiment likewise of the young and unexperienced. And indeed it must be some uneasiness to those who are innocent and undesigning themselves, to suspect other men, or to withhold trust and confidence from them. But however kind and favourable their apprehensions and inclinations may be, it would certainly be imprudent to trust to all appearances,

and give credit to every pretence. The Counsel in the text is given by our Lord to his honest well-meaning disciples, because he knew there were men in the world of bad dispositions, more than these unexperienced disciples were aware of: *Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents.* Solomon has an observation to this purpose: *the simple believeth every word, but the prudent looketh well to his goings.* The confidence placed in men ought to be proportioned to the evidences of their faithfulness and capacity. If any act otherwise, there is danger of shame and disappointment. It must therefore be of great advantage in life to be able to form a true judgment of men.

The knowledge of men, the skill of discerning their talents and dispositions, will be of use not only in business, but also in civil conversation, in the choice of friendship and relations, in designs of usefulness, and indeed in every occasion and occurrence of life. You will thereby know, whom to trust with safety, whom to be free and open with in conversation, whose favour it is your interest to seek, on whom you can bestow your favours and services with a likely prospect of doing some good, or with hopes of grateful returns, if ever you should want them.

3. Watch, and embrace opportunities. This is a rule, which ought to be observed with regard to our words and actions. *There is a season for every thing, and every thing is beautiful in its time. There is a time to speak, and a time*

to keep silence, says Solomon; Eccl. iii, 1, 11. Again, *A word spoken in due season, how good is it? A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.* Prov. xv. 23. chap. xxv. 11.

In all affairs there are some special opportunities, which it is a point of wisdom to improve. *He that gathers in summer is a wise son. But he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame,* chap. x. 5. Some opportunities, like that here mentioned by Solomon, are obvious to all. And it must be gross stupidity not to know them, and incorrigible sloth to neglect them. But there are some opportunities, which will be observed and taken by none but those who are discerning and attentive. Every one can see an opportunity, when it is past: but he only, who is wise, sees it beforehand, or perceives and embraces it, when present.

4. Advise with those who are able to give you good Counsel. *Without Counsel purposes are disappointed, but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.* Prov. xv. 22. At least, in all important and difficult cases call in the aid of some friends. *Every purpose is established by Counsel, and with good advice make war.* chap. xx. 18. It is great presumption in any man to be self-sufficient, and to suppose, that in all cases he can act well by his own skill alone.

As Counsel ought to be asked, so there should be a disposition to hearken to it; or at least, to weigh well the reasons that are brought for or against any design. *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that bearkens unto counsel is wise.* Prov. xii. 15.

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But yet there is need of some discretion in the choice of counsellors. They should be usually the aged and experienced; always, if possible, such as are sincere and disinterested. I scarce need therefore to caution you against advising with your rivals and competitors. If you are so happy as to have parents, to whom you can have recourse, you must be in the right to consult with them in affairs of moment. If you have not this advantage, however recollect the advices they have given you. Perhaps they have left with you some Counsels of Prudence, as well as of virtue. When you are forming designs inconsistent with their Counsels, give such designs a second consideration, before you take a final resolution. This may be reckoned a point of wisdom, as well as a piece of respect due to those who heartily wished your welfare.

After them advise with and hearken to those who are most like them in a sincere and unaffected concern for your true interest. But if any, whom you consult, always advise according to your own inclinations, you may be assured they are not your friends. It is not your interest they consult, but their own. So likewise, if any, of whom you honestly ask advice, with an intention to be informed and guided by them, are shy and reserved, though at other times, and upon other occasions, they are open enough, you should remember not to go to them again. It is not worth the while to reveal your designs to such. It can be of no advantage, and may be attended with some inconveniences.

5. *Restrain*

5. Refrain and govern your affections. This is of great importance to the prudent conduct of life. In all debates he who is calm and composed, as all are sensible, has a vast advantage over a heated adversary. But I mean not the restraint of anger only, or resentment upon a provocation; but a steady government of all the passions, and a calm and composed temper of mind in all occurrences. He who is overset by a cross accident, is lost beyond redress, and can never get out of a difficulty, though there still remain several ways of escape and recovery.

Avoid too great eagerness for any earthly thing. Men of violent inclination are immediately for action. They have no sooner thought of a thing but they must have it. They are at once passed the state of deliberation within themselves, and of consultation with others. Men who are extremely eager for gain and riches, are not always the most successful. They precipitate all their measures. They can never have an opportunity, because they cannot wait till it offers. Such usually run desperate hazards, and accordingly meet with great losses. Solomon, who has so often spoken of the benefit of diligence, does nevertheless discourage eagerness of spirit and action, as ruinous and destructive. *The thoughts of the diligent, says he, tend only to plenteousness: but of every one that is hasty, only to want.* Prov. xxi. 5.

Then, the men of hasty spirit often plunge themselves into great difficulties; which no after thought of their own, nor kind assistance of their

their friends can extricate them out of. What Solomon says of men subject to intemperate anger is very likely to be the case of all who have any other ungoverned passion: *a man of great wrath shall suffer punishment: for, if thou deliver him, yet thou must do it again.* Prov. xix.

19. If you help them out of one trouble, yet they will soon run themselves into some other. And in another place the same wise man has given a lively image of the defenceless and deplorable condition of those who are under the government of violent passions: *he that has no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.* Prov. xxv. 28.

It seems to be for this reason, that men of lesser abilities do often succeed better in business, and indeed in some important affairs, than the more acute and penetrating. They have slow capacities, but they are abundantly recompensed by the coolness of their passions. They move on a steady, even pace, without slips or falls; till at length, to the surprise of all who were not very discerning indeed, they distance many, who set out with much more life and vigour.

These are general rules of Prudence. They need not to be mentioned again. But they ought to be observed upon every particular occasion, and will be of use in all the affairs and actions of life that require prudent conduct and management.

Secondly, I am now to lay down some particular rules of Prudence concerning several branches of conduct, and divers circumstances
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of life. They will concern these four points before-mentioned; business, civil conversation, more intimate friendships and relations, and usefulness to others.

1. Of business. I may not presume to give many directions relating to this matter. But I apprehend it to be a point of great Prudence, for a man to endeavour to be fully master of his employment. He who is skilful in his calling, and diligently attends to it, and is punctual to his promises and engagements, can seldom fail of encouragement. These may be generally reckoned surer means of success, than a large acquaintance, address, importunity, or any other such like arts of procuring the dealings of men: though these need not be entirely neglected, and may be of use, if they are not too much depended on. Interest is a prevailing principle, and that will dispose men to be concerned with, and employ those who are skilful, diligent, and punctual.

It is also esteemed a point of Prudence for men to abide in the employment, to which they have been educated, and in which they have once engaged; unless there be some great and particular inconvenience attending it, or some strong and peculiar inducement to another.

But by no means hearken to the speeches of those, who would draw you off from all employment. Some there are in the world, men of sprightly and aspiring fancies, (as they would be thought,) who would persuade you, that business is below the dignity of rational beings;

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or however, of all who would shine and be distinguished. You will be justified by Solomon in throwing contempt on such imaginations: *he that is despised, and has a servant, is better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread. Again, he that tilleth his land, shall have plenty of bread, but he that followeth vain persons shall have poverty enough, Prov. xii. 9. 11.*

2. The next thing concerning which I would give some directions is civil conversation. In general, endeavour to act according to your own character, and maintain that suitably to the persons you meet with, of different abilities, principles and circumstances.

He is happy in the art of conversation, who can preserve a mean; without being light, or formal; neither too reserved, nor too open. Reservedness is disagreeable and offensive; too great openness, in mixed company, with which you are not well acquainted, is often attended with dangerous consequences. It may be a good rule for every man, to guard especially against that extreme, which he is most liable to fall into; by which he is in the greatest danger of exposing himself, or offending others. Which is the worst extreme, may not be easy to determine. But I think, if we will take the judgment of Solomon, too great openness must be the most inconsistent with Prudence. For silence is with him a mark of wisdom, and there is scarce any one thing, he has oftener recommended than the government of the tongue; nor any thing, he has more plainly, and more frequently condemned, than talkative-

tiveness. I shall remind you of some of his sayings upon this argument. *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin. But he that refraineth his lips is wise.* Prov. x. 19. *He that hath knowledge, spareth his words : even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise, and he that shutteth his lips, is esteemed a man of understanding.* chap. xvii. 27, 28. *The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright. But the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.* chap. xv. 2. *A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.* chap. xxix. 11. *Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding : but that which is in the midst of fools is made known.* chap. xiv. 33. *He that keepeth his mouth, keepeth his life : but he that openeth wide his mouth, shall have destruction.* chap. xiii. 3. Especially, be cautious of what you say of others ; and be not too forward in giving characters, either by way of praise or dispraise.

The only end of conversation is not to entertain, or instruct others. You are likewise to aim at your own improvement, and the increase of your present stock of learning and knowledge. Nor is it necessary, in order to be agreeable, that you should entertain the company with discourse. You may as much oblige some men by patient attention to what they say, as by producing just and new observations of your own. For young persons particularly, silence and modesty must be advantageous qualities in conversation. St. James's precept is general : *Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak ;* Jam. i. 19. and if attended to, would lessen

lessen the multitude of some mens words, very much to their own benefit, and the improvement of society.

Another rule of Prudence relating to this matter, which is also a point of duty, is: *if possible, live peaceably with all men.* Rom. xii. 18. Do not needlessly offend, or disoblige any. A resolution to please men at all adventures, amidst the present variety of sentiments and affections in the world, would engage us, at seasons, to desert the cause of truth, liberty and virtue. And therefore our Lord has justly pronounced a woe upon those who are universally applauded, saying: *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.* Luke vi. 26. Such a reputation is rarely to be obtained without a base and criminal indifference for some things very valuable and important to the general interest of mankind. However, do not despise any man, tho' ever so mean. Malice and hatred are active principles. And, as has been often observed, one enemy may do you more mischief, than many friends can do you good. Nor is there any man so mean, or so feeble, but he may some time have an opportunity of doing you much good, or much harm.

You are not to be afraid of men, nor too solicitous to please them, nor to stoop to flattery or meanness to gain their favour. These are methods neither very virtuous, nor very prudent. For they seldom procure lasting esteem or affection. If you gain mens favour by flattery, you can keep it no longer than you are willing to be their slaves, or their tools. But
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you may endeavour by easy civilities, and real services, to oblige and gain all you can. This we may do, this we ought to do, according to the rules of Christianity, good breeding and Prudence.

Choose, as near as may be, the conversation of those who are wiser and more experienced than yourselves. Avoid the company of those, who indulge intemperate mirth, and neglect the rules of decency; from whom you can expect no benefit, and from whom you are in danger of receiving a taint to your virtue, or a blot to your reputation. *He that walketh with wise persons, saith Solomon, shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* Prov. xiii. 20.

3. In the third place, I shall mention some observations concerning more intimate friendships and private relations. It is a rule to choose friends among acquaintance, and not to enter into intimacy with those of whom you have had no trial, because a false friend is the most dangerous enemy. Solomon has a direction relating to this point; *thine own friend, and thy father's friend forsake not.* Prov. xxviii. 10. The meaning is not, that we should not desert such, or refuse to assist them when they are in distress; but it is a rule of Prudence, to choose for friends, or to apply to those, when we are in any trouble or difficulty, whose sincerity and faithfulness have been tried and experienced.

In the choice of friends it may be prudent to have some regard to equality of age, as well as circumstance, and to an agreement of sentiments and dispositions.

If you are to avoid the conversation of the openly vicious, (as was before observed,) you are to make friendship only with men of known and approved virtue. Let those be your friends, whom God himself loves; the meek, the humble, the peaceable who abhor strife and contention. Solomon's caution against familiarity with men of a contrary disposition is delivered with some peculiar concern and earnestness: *make no friendship, says he, with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.* Prov. xxii. 24, 25. You may likewise consider, whether they shew a good oeconomy in their own affairs: what has hitherto been their behaviour among their friends and acquaintance: what proofs they have given of fidelity, discretion, candour, generosity. The more good properties meet in your friend, the more entire and comfortable will be your friendship, and the more likely is it to be durable. Happy is the man, who has a few friends; true, discreet, generous. But to admit into intimacy men destitute of all good qualities, who neither have faithfulness nor generosity to stand by you in distresses and afflictions, nor wisdom to direct you in difficulties, would be only to encrease the troubles and vexations of life, without abating any of them, or making provision for perplexed and difficult circumstances.

Solomon, who was sensible of the blessing of a true friend, and has described the advantages and the offices of friendship, has also
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strongly represented the disappointment and vexation of misplaced confidence. Concerning the advantages of friendship he speaks in this manner. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* Prov. xvii. 17. *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth: for he has not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not easily broken.* Eccl. iv. 9—12. But then he has observed likewise by way of caution and admonition: *confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint.* Prov. xxv. 19.

When you have adopted any into intimacy and friendship, they are in a great measure upon a level with relations. Though they differ somewhat, I shall speak of them jointly, to avoid prolixity.

There are here two things principally to be aimed at: one is, that friendships and alliances be preserved without open ruptures: the other is, that whilst there remains an outward shew of friendship, or alliances subsist; there may be a real harmony, and a mutual exchange of affections and services.

In the first place, it is of great importance, that friendships and alliances, once contracted, should be preserved, without open ruptures. For, though you have right on your side;

yet * breaches between friends, or relatives, are seldom without scandal to both parties. But if you escape that, you will not avoid all uneasiness in yourselves. A distant strangeness, or open variance, after mutual endearments, will be grievous to men of kind and generous dispositions. The other end is the preservation of a real harmony.

In order to secure both these ends several things are of great use. It is an observation of Solomon relating to this point: *a man that has friends must shew himself friendly*. Prov. xviii. 24. You must not admit a selfish temper. You are to be concerned for your friend's interest, as well as your own.

As perfection is not to be found on earth, you are to be prepared and disposed to overlook some faults. You are not to know every thing which you see or hear. *He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter, separateth very friends*. Prov. xvii. 9. *A fool's wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covereth shame*. chap. xii. 16. If any difference happen, drop it again as soon as you recover your temper. *The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with*. chap xvii.

* It will not be amiss to transcribe here a passage of Photius. Some readers will be pleased to see, how this thought is expressed by so fine a writer. Μη ταχὺς ἡσθα ζευγνύειν εἰς φιλίαν· συζεύξας δὲ, παντὶ τρόπῳ τὴν δεσμὸν αὐτοῦ συντήρει· ἀσπας τὰ πολλοὺς ἀνέχων τὸ βάρος, πολλὴν μὲν ψυχῆς κίνδυνον ἐπαγει· αἱ γὰρ πρὸς τὰς φίλους διαστάσεις τὴν ὅλην προαίρεσιν ἐκφανρίζουσιν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ὑπαίτιον μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν ἀντίτιον εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν ὑπόνοιαν καταπαύουσιν. Phot. Ep. i. p. 27.

14. You are not to break with a friend for a small matter.

The better to secure the lasting love and good will of your friends, aim not barely at the preservation of a real affection for them, and the performance of real services, but consult likewise the manner of performing benefits. You think this worthy of your regard in order to gain a friendship: Why should you not also for preserving, or cherishing it?

Indeed, all good offices should be done in an obliging manner. And friendly actions are to be improved by friendly words. There is a polite piece of advice in the book of Ecclesiasticus: *My son, blemish not thy good deeds; neither use uncomfortable words, when thou givest any thing. Shall not the dew assuage the heat? So is a word better than a gift. Lo, is not a word better than a gift? But both are with a gracious man.* Eccl. xviii. 15—17.

Trespass not too far on the goodness and affection of the kindest and most loving friend or relative by too frequent contradictions, especially in matters of small moment; or by too keen, or too frequent jests, or by any seeming neglect, or a rude familiarity: but whilst you use the openness, freedom and confidence of a friend; oblige yourselves to the same, or very near the same outward forms of civility and respect with which you receive a stranger. This must be of some importance, because few men can persuade themselves, that they are really beloved, when they seem to be despised.

4. The last thing to be spoken to is usefulness to others. Though I am giving rules and directions chiefly to young people, who are but setting out in the world; yet I think it not proper to omit entirely this matter, there being few good and innocent persons, however young, who have not also some generosity; and they are apt to be forming designs of usefulness to other men, as well as of advancement for themselves.

There are two branches of usefulness; one concerning the interest of civil society, the other the interest of truth and religion; or the temporal, and the spiritual good and welfare of men.

One branch of usefulness is serving the interest of civil society. For this every man may be concerned, having first carefully informed himself about it, that he may make a true judgment wherein it consists. You should manifest a steady regard to the public welfare upon every occasion that requires your assistance: shewing, that you are not to be imposed upon by false pretences, and that your integrity is inviolable; that you will not for a little present profit, nor for all your own personal share in the world, sell, or betray the welfare of the public, and of mankind in general. If you maintain this steadiness in the way suitable to your station, it will procure you weight and influence. I suppose this may be more adviseable, than to imitate those who, out of a forward zeal for the publick, have been so far transported as to leave their proper station, and set upon reforming the world, hoping to root out at once
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all abuses and corruptions. From some things that have already happened in the world, in almost every age and part of it, one may safely foretell, what will be the issue of such an undertaking: you will be baffled, and then despised. Possibly, Solomon has an eye to such attempts as these, when he says: *Be not righteous over-much, neither make thyself over-wise: why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Eccl. vii. 16.

It is a regular and becoming deportment in a man's own proper station, which is most likely to give him weight and authority. Go on therefore by a just discharge of all the duties of your condition, to lay up a stock of reputation and influence. To do this will be great prudence, and to improve it, as occasions offer, or to hazard and lay it all out for the good of the publick, in a case of emergence, will be both prudent and generous.

The other branch of usefulness is promoting the interest of truth and religion. There are three or four rules to be observed here, which may be collected from some directions, and the example of our blessed Lord and his apostles. *Cast not your pearls before swine: if they persecute you in one city, flee into another:* instruct men, as they are able to bear it: use mildness of speech, and meekness of behaviour.

These rules partly regard our own safety; and partly the best way of obtaining the end aimed at. For, as every good man ought to have a zeal for the happiness of others, and particularly for promoting truth and virtue; so it is a point of Prudence to pursue such good ends in the

use of those means, which are most likely to obtain them, and with as little danger or damage to ourselves as may be.

The first is a rule delivered by our Saviour: *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.* Matth. vii. 6. There is a rule of like import in the Proverbs: *Speak not in the ear of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words.* Prov. xxiii. 9. This too is partly the design of that direction, which St. Paul gives to Timothy: describing some men, that they had a *form of godliness, denying the power of it; from such, says he, turn away.* 2 Tim. iii. 5. Leave them, as men whom you have no prospect of doing any good to. Our Lord himself observed this rule. For he rarely addressed directly to the Pharisees, but rather taught the people. And his disciples afterwards having made a tender of the Gospel to the Jews, when they rejected it, went from them to the Gentiles. Acts xiii. 46.

The true character of those men who are not the subjects of instruction is this; they *trust in themselves, that they are righteous, and despise others.* Luke xviii. 9. Again: *their heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should be converted and healed.* Matt. xiii. 15.

These are not to be instructed. Nor would they admit a direct address and application to be made to them. You may warn others against

gainst them, you may weep over them, you may pray for them, but you cannot teach them. If they are not under some external restraints, *they turn again and rend you.* If therefore upon trial you meet with men of this character and disposition, you are to retreat as well as you can. The most that can be thought of is to wait for a better opportunity.

However, our blessed Lord gives this charge to his disciples: *What I tell you in darkeness, that speak ye in light; and what you hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house top.* Matt. x. 27. Proclaim the doctrine you have heard from me publicly wherever you go, and do all that lies in your power to recommend it to all men. And it must be owned, that they who have an opportunity of applying to great numbers of men, either by discourse or writing, have a vast advantage; and they are bound by their fidelity to Christ, and by all that is dear and sacred in truth, religion and virtue, to improve this advantage to the utmost of their ability. If they scatter abroad the principles of religion, some will fall upon good ground, whence may be expected a plentiful harvest.

The second rule relating to this matter is, *If they persecute you in one city, flee into another.* Matth. x. 23. You may decline the heat of mens rage and displeasure, and reserve yourselves for better times, or for more teachable and better disposed persons. Of the first believers after our Lord's ascension it is said: *And at that time there was a great persecution against the church that was at Jerusalem, and they*

they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. It is likely, the apostles had some special directions from the Holy Ghost, not to depart from Jerusalem, and they there enjoyed accordingly a special protection. But the rest of the believers left Jerusalem for the present, and shifted for themselves, as they could, in other parts. Nay we afterwards find apostles also observing this rule. Peter having been delivered out of prison by an angel, after he had been put in custody by Herod, *departed and went to another place.* Acts xii. 17. Of Paul and Barnabas it is related, that when at Iconium *there was an assault made both of the Gentils, and also of the Jews, to use them despitefully; they were aware of it, and fled unto Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and unto the region that lyes round about.* Acts xiv. 5, 6.

Thirdly, teach men as they are able to bear it. So did our blessed Lord. Says the Evangelist: *And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it.* Mark iv. 33. So taught he the disciples also, delivering some things with some obscurity, because they were not able to bear a plain and full revelation of them: *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.* John xvi. 12. This may be the fault of men, that they are not able to hear every truth plainly spoken: but yet there must be some compliance and condescension in this respect. *And I, brethren, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual,*
but

but as to carnal, even as unto babes in Christ Jesus. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.

1 Cor. iii. 1, 2. You must therefore, as the apostles did, *become all things to all men, that by all means you may save some.* 1 Cor. ix. 22. You are not to depart from your own integrity, nor your proper character: but so far as can be done consistent with these, you are to suit your instructions to mens abilities and conditions.

Fourthly, in this work use great mildness of speech, and meekness of behaviour. You are not to provoke any that are teachable by reflecting on their want of understanding, nor to suffer your zeal to degenerate into rudeness. It has been observed by some, that the apostles of Christ were eminent examples of an excellent decorum in their discourses, and in their whole behaviour. And among other directions to Timothy, St. Paul hath not failed to recommend particularly meekness of behaviour, as the most likely method of reclaiming men from their errors. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth.* 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. That you may gain men to truth and virtue, apply the strongest arguments to their reason and conscience, without a contemptuous treatment of their persons or prejudices.

These gentle methods of reformation will be generally preferred by good men, and may be reckoned

reckoned the most probable means of conviction : But I do not deny, that some faults and follies of men may fitly be ridiculed ; and some men may be *rebuked sharply*, Tit. i. 13. by proper persons, *and with all authority*. chap. ii. 15. All which is no more than putting in practice the direction of Solomon : *Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit*. Prov. xxvi. 5.

I have now set before you some general rules of prudence, and some particular directions concerning divers branches of conduct. But you are not to suppose that prudence is to be learned by rules only. It is rather a habit, which must be gained by observation, action, and experience. Suffer not yourselves to be embarrassed and perplexed with a great multitude and variety of rules, nor be over solicitous about a proper decorum. For too great anxiety always spoils the performance. In a word, be but fully master in your own character, and possessed of an habitual desire of pleasing, together with a modest perswasion, that you shall do well, and you will do so.

There can be no occasion for me to add a particular recommendation of the study of prudence, having before shewn the necessity, and the grounds and reasons of it. The text itself demonstrates the lawfulness and expedience of prudent conduct. Nor can any be altogether insensible of the importance of it to success in life. Virtue, learning, the knowledge of arts and sciences, are like diamonds, that have an intrinsic value, but must be set

and polished, before they are fit for show or use. Though divers other natural and acquired accomplishments may procure affection and esteem, it is discretion only that can preserve them.

I am not apprehensive of any abuse of the directions here laid down. They have no tendency to make men selfish or cunning. They are designed for the young and unexperienced; as likewise for the honest, and good-natured, and generous, of any age and condition. Though you should be simple, they who are designing will practise their arts of subtlety and mischief. By a prudent behaviour you will not encourage their evil practices, but only secure yourselves against them, and be better qualified for success and usefulness in the world.

After all, you are not to depend upon your own care and prudence, but to recommend yourselves and your honest well-laid designs to the divine protection and blessing. It has been seen by those who have diligently observed human counsels and events, *that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all.* As all human affairs are liable to accidents and disasters, a firm perswasion, and serious regard to the over-ruling providence of God, which is not limited by the present scene of things, cannot but contribute to your happiness, by preparing your mind for all events, and enabling you to bear afflictions and disappointments with patience.

It

It may likewise be one good foundation of happiness, to admit but moderate affections for the great things of this world. If you are truly religious, you may be content with a little, and will manage that well. Without a great estate, by frugal and prudent conduct, you may have enough for yourselves, and your immediate dependents, and be able to do good to others also. Happy had it been for some men as well as for the public, if from the very first, and all their days, they had rather aimed to be wise and good, than rich or great! Finally, if you do good for the sake of doing good, which is a noble principle; and with a view to future rewards, which are incomparably great, and certain: you will not be much concerned, though you miss of present rewards; which you know to be but trifles, and never were your principal aim.

May you then add to virtue prudence, and abound in both yet more and more; that you may escape the snares of the wicked, and the misapprehensions of the weak; may have success in business, acceptance with mankind, happiness in friendship and every private relation; may be useful members of civil society, and of the church of God; may enjoy contentment, and peace of mind, in all events: and at length obtain the distinguished recompences, which God, who is infinitely wise and holy, will bestow upon those, who have not only been *undefiled in the way*, Psal. cxix. 1. but have also advanced the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and the honour of his name in the world.

FORMS of DEVOTION,
FOR THE
USE of FAMILIES.

By the EDITOR.

It is a very common error to suppose that the
ancient Egyptians were a people of slaves and
serfs. It is true that they were a people of
slaves and serfs, but they were also a people
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FORMS OF DEVOTION



USE OF FAMILIES

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FORMS of DEVOTION for the Use of FAMILIES.

A Prayer for the LORD'S-DAY Morning.

ALMIGHTY God, and most merciful Father ! Thou art the high and the holy one who inhabiteſt eternity; who dwelleſt in that light inacceſſible, unto which no mortal eye can approach. We would eſteem it our higheſt honour, and the nobleſt privilege of our natures, that we are permitted to appear in thy preſence, and to ſpread our wants before thee, our ever-gracious and compaſſionate Father and Friend, who art tenderly concerned for the happineſs of all thy creatures.

Be graciously pleaſed, this morning, to look down upon us with an eye of pity and compaſſion; frail dependant creatures as we are; ſurrounded with wants which we cannot ſupply; expoſed to numberleſs ſnares and dangers which we can neither foreſee nor prevent; and liable every moment of our lives, to be ſeduced into the paths of error and folly by temptations, which, of ourſelves, we are unable to reſiſt. Conſcious of our own weakneſs and inſuffici-

ency for the discharge of our duty, would we have recourse to thee, the Father of our spirits, the author of every good and of every perfect gift, and would humbly and earnestly implore the aids of thy spirit, to fortify our weak resolutions, and to enable us to rise superior to every difficulty. Never leave us to ourselves, O Lord; never forsake us, thou God of our salvation. Conduct us with safety and honour through the various stages and temptations of mortal life; and when thou hast answered all the ends of thy kind Providence by us here on earth, may we finish our course with joy, and, finally, have an abundant entrance administered unto us into thine everlasting kingdom.

Enable us, O most merciful Father of our spirits! to make a wise and faithful improvement of the seasons and means of grace, which thou art graciously pleased to favour us with. This day, may we worship thee in spirit and in truth. Inspire us, great inspiring God! with the deepest humility; the warmest gratitude; and the most ardent devotion, when we join with our fellow-creatures in offering up our sincere acknowledgments to our supreme Creator, our unwearied benefactor, the God in whom we live, move, and have our beings. May we engage in the several acts of public worship with pious affections, and with such a temper and disposition of mind as becomes the disciples of the blessed Jesus.

May thy Sabbaths, O God, be our delight; may we attend on the ordinances of thy house without distraction; and receive divine truths

into

into honest and unprejudiced minds. Forbid, O God, that we should be of the number of those who draw nigh to thee with their mouths, and honour thee with their lips, while their hearts are far from thee; but may our hearts be temples dedicated to the living God; and may no vain and worldly imaginations, no anxious cares about our temporal concerns, pollute them.

Assist, we beseech thee, gracious Father, the faithful ministers of thy word, of every denomination. Strengthen them with strength in the inward man; may they be well instructed in the doctrines of the Gospel, and rightly divide the word of truth. May thy blessing, O God, accompany thy word, and make it effectual to enlighten the ignorant, to convince and convert the sinner, to comfort and encourage the humble and broken-hearted, and to build up thy whole church, by true faith and holiness, unto salvation.

May all who profess to believe in Christ improve this day to those excellent purposes for which it was appointed; may they love the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth; and may all of us feel in our hearts the beginnings of that everlasting Sabbath, which we hope to celebrate with saints and angels, in the regions of eternal bliss and joy.

Now unto thee, the king eternal, immortal, and invisible, God supreme, be glory, honour, dominion, and praise, from henceforth, and for ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer for the LORD'S-DAY Evening.

O EVER blessed, and highly exalted Lord our God! Thou hast established thy throne in the Heavens, and thy kingdom ruleth over all. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints! Who shall not fear before thee, and with the most profound reverence and humility, adore and magnify thy name?

We would rejoice that thou, the Lord God omnipotent, reignest; that we are thy children, and thy subjects; and would refer ourselves, and the disposal and management of all our concerns, absolutely unto thee; being solicitously careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with humble, fervent, and devout thanksgivings, making known our requests unto thee.

We would bless thee for our reasonable natures; for those powers and faculties, by which we are distinguished from the brutes that perish, and made capable of the sublime and refined pleasures of virtue and true religion; of knowing, serving, and for ever enjoying thee, the eternal source and fountain of perfection, life, and blessedness. We would adore that kind Providence that cast our lot in a land of light and liberty, where we have so many advantages and opportunities for improving in know-

knowledge and virtue, in every thing that is truly excellent and praise-worthy.

To thee, O most merciful father, we owe whatever degree of health and strength we enjoy in our bodies; the free and regular exercise of the powers and faculties of our minds; our plenty, our peace, and our liberty; all the endearments of society and friendship; all the necessaries, conveniencies, and agreeable accommodations of this present frail and temporary life.

In an especial manner, would we adore and magnify thy name, that ever we heard of the new and living way of salvation in and through a Mediator; that, when mankind had ruined themselves, thou wast graciously pleased to send thy Son into the world, to put an end to sin by the sacrifice of himself; to point out unto us the path that leads to glory, honour, and immortality; to exhibit to our view a glorious example and pattern of righteousness; and to give us the fullest assurances of a state of endless felicity, as the reward of a sincere and persevering though imperfect virtue. What heart can conceive, O God, what tongue can utter the wonders of thy love! Praise the Lord, O our souls, and all that is within us be stirred up to magnify his name!

We acknowledge, and we desire to do it with the deepest humility, that we are altogether unworthy of the least of thy mercies. In numberless instances have we proved ungrateful to thee our Supreme Benefactor, disloyal to thee our rightful Sovereign, undutiful children

to the most affectionate of parents; hadst thou been strict to mark, or extreme to punish our numerous and highly aggravated offences, we had long before now been banished from thy presence, and the glory of thy power, and had our portion assigned us with unbelievers. But thou art the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to wrath, abundant in mercy and plenteous in compassion.

Be merciful unto us, O Lord our God, be merciful unto us! according to the multitude of thy tender, essential, and unchangeable mercies, blot out all our iniquities. Work in us a repentance to salvation, for all the errors of our past conduct, never to be repented of. Henceforth may love to thee, the greatest and the best of Beings, be the prevailing principle of all our actions; and may it be our supreme ambition, and our most solicitous concern to approve ourselves to thee in the whole of our conduct. May we be able to say, at all times, with integrity and with ardent devotion, Whom have we in Heaven, but thee, and there is none in all the earth that we desire besides thee; our souls thirst for God, even the living God.

Thou hast made it our duty, and we would make it our delight and pleasure, not only to pray for ourselves, but to offer up our petitions and intercessions for all mankind. May thy ways, O thou supreme Governor of universal nature, be known on earth, and thy saving health to every nation. Put an end, we beseech thee, to idolatry, to persecution for righteousness sake, to the violation of the natural rights

rights and liberties of mankind, and to violence, tyranny, and oppression, throughout the earth.

May pure religion, and genuine Christianity universally prevail and flourish, and may all that name the name of Christ, be careful to depart from iniquity. Bless these sinful lands of our nativity, Great Britain and Ireland. Establish the heart of our only rightful sovereign king George in thy fear, and his throne in righteousness. May all in stations of power and influence endeavour, both by their authority and their example, to suppress profaneness, immorality and luxury, and to promote an universal reformation of manners in the midst of us.

Extend thy compassionate regards to all the children of affliction: let them not despise thy chastening, O Lord, nor faint when they are rebuked of thee. We commend to thy fatherly goodness and care, all our dear relations, friends, and benefactors: and if we have any enemies, gracious God! forgive them, and turn their hearts.

We bless thee for the liberty and opportunity we have this day had of worshipping thee according to the light of our own minds, and the dictates and convictions of our own consciences. We bless thee for the instructions we have received from thy holy word, and beg that thou wouldst follow them with thy blessing. Accept, we beseech thee, our sincere desires to serve thee, and mercifully forgive the many weaknesses and defects that have attended us in the religious services in which we have been en-

gaged. If we have, this day, formed any good resolutions, gracious Father! strengthen and confirm them; and let not the cares of this life, nor the deceitfulness of riches, render thy word unfruitful.

We commit ourselves to thy gracious protection this night. Defend us from every distressing evil: may our sleep be sweet and refreshing unto us, and may we arise, in the morning of the ensuing day, with hearts full of gratitude to our unwearied benefactor, and betake ourselves to the discharge of our respective duties with more chearfulness than hitherto we have done. All our wants are known unto thee: supply them, O most merciful Father of our spirits, from the rich and inexhaustible fountain of thy goodness; we ask it in the name, and as the disciples of Jesus Christ, of thee,

Our Father who art in Heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, for ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer for MONDAY Morning.

O LORD our God! Thou art good, and still doing good unto all thy creatures; thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Every evening and every morning we receive fresh displays

plays of thy bounty, notwithstanding that we remain evil and unthankful.

We acknowledge our dependance on thee ; our continual obligations to thee ; and our unworthiness to receive any good thing from thee. Though thou hast formed us after thine own image, reasonable and immortal creatures, yet have we groveled in the dust, debased the dignity of our Heaven-born natures, and, in numberless instances, been the voluntary slaves of vice and folly. We acknowledge our transgressions, O Lord, and desire to be deeply humbled in thy sight on account of them. Enter not into strict judgment with us, O most gracious Father ! Be our reconciled God in and through a Mediator ; speak peace unto our souls, and let us not return again into folly.

Purify our souls, O thou eternal fountain of purity ! from every corrupt affection ; enlighten our minds with the knowledge of the truth ; and may every principle of our natures be brought under due subjection to the authority of our supreme Lord and Lawgiver. May we seriously consider, that we are accountable creatures, candidates for immortality ; and as our time here is short, may we improve it to the best of purposes ; laying aside every weight, and every burden, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, may we run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.

May the great principles of that holy religion, by which we profess to regulate our conduct, have an habitual influence on our lives and conversation.

versations; and may the amiable example of the great Captain of our Salvation be frequently before our eyes. Like him may we be holy, harmless, undefiled; and separate from sin and sinners. May we improve every opportunity of instructing the ignorant, of reclaiming the vicious, of comforting those that mourn, and of doing good, as far as in us lies, to the souls and bodies of all those with whom we converse. To do good, and to communicate, may we never forget; as knowing, that with such sacrifices thou art always well pleased.

Teach us, O Heavenly Father, to form a just estimate of human life, and to moderate our desires after the enjoyments of this world: being fully convinced of the unsatisfactory nature of every earthly good, may we chuse thee for our everlasting portion; and may it be our supreme ambition, and our most solicitous concern to approve ourselves to thee in the whole of our conduct.

And, O most merciful Father of our spirits! have compassion upon our frailty and infirmity. Thou knowest our frame; thou knowest we are weak, imperfect creatures; surrounded with numberless snares and dangers, that may prove fatal to our integrity, fatal to the interests of our immortal souls. Fortify our weak resolutions, O God of our salvation! by the aids of thy grace. May no difficulties discourage us; may none of the allurements or vain pleasures of this transitory life ever corrupt our integrity; may we trample under foot, with a noble and generous disdain, all the trifles of time and sense,
when

when they stand in competition with our duty to thee our God, our fellow-creatures, or ourselves. In all our ways may we acknowledge thee, and do thou direct our paths.

Accept of our grateful acknowledgements, this morning, for the mercies of last night. Take us under thy gracious care and protection, this day: enable us to discharge, with fidelity and chearfulness, the various duties incumbent on us, as men and Christians; ever remembering that we act, at all times, under the eye of an all-seeing and heart-searching God, before whose awful tribunal we must soon appear, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, whether good or evil.

Now to the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer for MONDAY Evening.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God! Thou art the fountain of being; the Father of angels and of men; the author of every good and of every perfect gift. Thou art possessed of every adorable and every amiable excellence; supreme in wisdom, power, and goodness; the worthy object of the highest esteem, and most affectionate regards of all thy reasonable creatures.

Seated on thy throne of omnipotence, thou rulest supreme over all the regions of thy wide spread dominion; showering down on their re-
spective

spective inhabitants a rich profusion of blessings, suited to their various wants and necessities. The eyes of all wait on thee, O thou eternal fountain of goodness and mercy ! and thou openest thy liberal hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

We would rejoice that the reigns of universal government are in thy hands ; that all events are under the direction of unerring wisdom and unchangeable goodness ; and we desire to be entirely resigned to the disposal of thine all-wise and ever gracious Providence.

We bless thee, gracious God ! for having placed us in a distinguished rank and order of beings ; for having formed us capable of contemplating the excellencies of thy nature, of celebrating thy praises, of tracing the footsteps of thy power, wisdom, and goodness in the works of thy hands. We must acknowledge, O Lord, and we desire to do it with shame and confusion of face, that we have, in too many instances, acted a part highly unworthy of that nature thou hast bestowed upon us. We have counteracted thy gracious design in our formation ; have neglected the cultivation of our rational and moral powers ; and instead of regulating our conduct by the sacred and immutable dictates of reason and conscience, have been slaves to sense and appetite, unmindful of our dignity as men, and our hopes as Christians. Father, we have sinned in thy sight, and are not worthy to be called thy children. Enter not into strict judgment with us : pardon us, gracious God ! according to the essential

sential goodness of thy nature, and the declarations made in thy Son's Gospel.

We hope we can truly say, that our souls are filled with sincere sorrow for the ingratitude and disingenuity of our past conduct, that we abhor every wicked way, and have sincerely resolved, in thy strength, to correct whatever is amiss, in our conduct, and in the temper and disposition of our minds.

We are sensible, O Lord, of our insufficiency for the regular discharge of our duty without thy aid and assistance; we have often experienced how little we can depend upon our most solemn purposes of reformation and amendment, since at the return of our temptations we have been unmindful of them, and acted contrary to them. We would not therefore trust to our own strength, but humbly implore the assistance of thy spirit to enable us to subdue every irregular appetite and corrupt affection.

May the great principles of religion have an habitual influence on the whole of our conduct, and as we name the name of Christ, may we be careful to depart from all iniquity, and to walk in those steps which our compassionate Saviour has consecrated for our imitation.

We would not be unmindful, O God, of the interests of our fellow-creatures, but would offer up our intercessions for all men, and earnestly pray that the glad tidings of peace, pardon and reconciliation, may be communicated to all the inhabitants of the earth. Purify, and reform the Christian churches every where;
and

and may all, who profess the religion of Jesus, live as becomes his genuine disciples.

Look in much mercy on this our dear native country: may it ever be the object of thy peculiar care; and may the interests of truth and virtue, of liberty and true religion, always flourish in it.

We would recommend to thy favourable regards all who are near and dear unto us; begging that thou wouldest constantly guide, support, and comfort them.

Be merciful, O God! to all the children of affliction; whatever be their pressures, do thou graciously remove them, and abundantly supply all their wants out of the inexhaustible fountain of thy goodness.

Accept of our united acknowledgements for the mercies of the past day. Graciously forgive whatever thou hast seen amiss in our conduct, and accept of our sincere, though imperfect attempts to serve thee.

Watch over us, we beseech thee, O God! through the silent watches of the ensuing night. May we lie down in peace, and sleep in safety, and may be fitted by moderate rest for the duties and services of another day.

Hear our prayers, we beseech thee, O gracious Father! and accept of us in Jesus Christ, our compassionate Saviour; in whose words we further call upon thee, as, Our Father who art in Heaven, &c.

A Prayer for TUESDAY Morning.

O EVER blessed, and highly exalted Lord our God! This morning would we, the workmanship of thy hands, the constant beneficiaries of thy kind Providence, prostrate our very souls at the footstool of thy glorious and high lifted throne; to celebrate the praises of our great Creator, our constant preserver, our unwearied and most gracious benefactor; to acknowledge our numberless obligations to thee; and to implore the continuance of thy favour and protection.

When we consider thine infinite majesty and glory, O God, and the inconceivable distance there is between thee and us; when we reflect upon thy spotless purity and holiness, and at the same time our own vileness and unworthiness, what abundant reason have we, with the deepest humility, to come into thy presence, and to worship and bow down low before thee, the Lord our maker, acknowledging our constant dependance upon thee, and our unworthiness to receive any good thing from thee.

Adored be thy name, O gracious God! that such guilty and unworthy creatures as we are have liberty of access to thy throne of mercy; that we are permitted to draw nigh unto thee, as our reconciled God and Father, with hopes of obtaining mercy, and finding grace to help us in every time of our need.

In the name of our great Mediator and Advocate, and as his disciples, would we draw
near

near to thee at this time, humbly and earnestly beseeching thee to forgive our manifold sins and iniquities, to cleanse us from all impurity, to enable us to walk before thee in newness of life, and so to form the temper of our minds, and regulate the whole course of our conduct, as becomes the purity of that religion we profess to believe. Denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, may we live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, and hereafter be admitted to partake of that happiness, which thou hast prepared for all those who sincerely love and obey thee.

Enable us, frequently and seriously, to take an impartial and deliberate survey of our own tempers and characters, and to bring our actions before the tribunal of reason and conscience. And do thou, O most merciful Father of our spirits! search us, and try us; remove the veil of self-love and partiality from before the eyes of our minds, and shew us to ourselves in our genuine characters. Whatever is irregular and perverted in our inward frame, do thou graciously assist us in rectifying; if there are any good dispositions in us, may they be abundantly strengthened and established by thee.

May we never rest satisfied with any attainments we may have already made in virtue, or think that we are already perfect; but forgetting the things that are behind, may we press forward, with unremitting ardor, towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Root

Root out of our minds, we beseech thee, O God! all the seeds of malice, pride, envy, backbiting, uncharitableness, and hypocrisy. May we cultivate humility; follow peace with all men; put on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit; rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep; and thus bearing one anothers burdens, may we fulfil the law of Christ.

We would bless thee, O gracious Father! for the mercies of this last night, and for the light and comforts of this morning. We thank thee for that measure of health we enjoy in our bodies, and for the free and regular exercise of the powers and faculties of our minds. May thy kind Providence watch over us, this day, for good; and crown all our honourable undertakings and honest labours with success. Enable us to discharge every duty with integrity and chearfulness, and to improve every blessing we receive from thee to thine honour and glory; and the praise of all shall be to thy excellent name, in Christ, blessed for ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer for TUESDAY Evening.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God! Father of mercies, and God of all love and consolation! Thou art good and still doing good to all thy creatures; thy nature is love and goodness itself. We would call upon our souls, and all that is within us, this evening, to adore and magnify thy name for the numberless in-

stances of thy paternal goodness towards us. We have shared richly of the bounties of thy Providence, O God! Thy loving-kindness and tender mercies have followed us all the days of our lives.

Thy guardian care presided over our infant years, and the inadvertent paths of our youth; thy kind Providence ordered our lot in a land of light and liberty, where we have had the unspeakable advantage of a religious and virtuous education, and where we have the knowledge of thee, the true God, and the way to salvation by Jesus Christ.

Alas, O Lord! when we reflect on the various instances of thy bounty, and at the same time on our own ingratitude and disingenuity, what abundant reason have we to blush and to be ashamed of appearing in thy presence. We have in numberless instances, rebelled against thee, and forsaken the paths of thy commandments. Save us, gracious Father! from the fatal consequences of our follies: leave us not to perish in our sins, for thou delightest in mercy.

We desire to approach thee, in the name, and as the disciples of Jesus, and, with grateful hearts, to accept his offered salvation. Be merciful unto us, O Lord our God! forgive us our sins, and purify us from all iniquity. Enable us, we beseech thee, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and wherein we have done wickedly, to do so no more. Strengthen us, by thy spirit, with might in the inner man, that we may be able to subdue every irregular and

corrupt affection, and resist those temptations wherewith we are surrounded.

In the future conduct of our lives, may we better answer the great ends of our being, and adorn the Gospel which we profess to believe. Raise our minds, we beseech thee, above every mean and sordid pursuit, and may our hopes and affections be unmoveably fixed upon those rewards which are laid up in Heaven for all those, and for those only, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek after glory, honour, and immortality.

Under all the trials and difficulties of the present life, may our souls be fixed, trusting in God: and may the consideration that all events are under the direction of unerring wisdom, reconcile our minds to every dispensation of Providence. In prosperity, may we never forget thee our God; in adversity, may the comforts of religion support us: by all the methods of thy Providence and means of thy Grace, may we be fitted for increasing usefulness in the present life, and for final happiness and eternal salvation in that which is to come.

Extend thy mercy, O thou eternal fountain of mercy! to all those whom we are bound to pray for. If it be consistent with the wise and gracious purposes of thy Providence, may the inhabitants of all the earth be taught to know thee, and brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. May all who profess the Christian name, adorn their profession by an exemplary conduct, by a sincere and unre-

served obedience to the laws of the Gospel, and by purity of heart and life.

Be favourable, we beseech thee, O God! to these lands of Britain and Ireland, wherein we dwell: be a wall of fire about us, and the glory in the midst of us. May those who rule over us be men fearing God, hating covetousness, and all manner of iniquity; and in all their deliberations for the publick welfare, may they be under the direction of that wisdom which is from above.

Be merciful, gracious God! to the sick and afflicted; supply the wants of the poor and needy; and do good unto all, as their various necessities may require.

We bless thee for the mercies of this day, and implore thy protection throughout the night. Guard us from every evil; may our sleep be refreshing; and may we arise in the morning rejoicing in thy goodness, and with hearts full of gratitude to thee our unwearied benefactor.

Now unto thee, the king eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God, be glory, honour, dominion, and praise, from henceforth, and for ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer for WEDNESDAY Morning.

GRACIOUS, and ever blessed God! we desire, with reverence and humility, to offer up our morning sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to thee our sovereign Lord and
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bountiful benefactor. We would bless thy name that thou hast been our defence during the darkness and silence of the night past; and hast caused us once more to hear and see thy loving-kindness in the morning.

Accept, gracious Father! of our grateful acknowledgements for the numberless instances of thy goodness towards us. May a sense of the many obligations we are under to love and obey thee be deeply impressed upon our minds, and influence the whole of our conduct.

Assist us, we beseech thee, in our endeavours to act a part suitable to our obligations. Thou, O Lord! knowest our weaknesses, and the many dangers and temptations to which we are exposed. May thy strength be perfect in our weakness. Help our infirmities, gracious God! and enlarge our hearts, that we may run the way of thy commandments with cheerfulness and delight.

Preserve us, we earnestly pray, from those temptations which most easily overcome us, and which have, alas! too often drawn us aside from the path of our duty.

Deliver us from the influence of evil habits, from the contagion of bad example, and from the allurements of false pleasure; sanctify us thoroughly in spirit, soul, and body; that being renewed in the whole man after thy blessed image, we may be daily dying unto sin, living unto righteousness, and making continual progress in the divine life.

Enable us, frequently and seriously, to consider our real character and circumstances as

men; to reflect that we are frail, dependant, ignorant, and guilty creatures: and may such reflections fill our minds with genuine humility, candor, mutual forbearance, and condescension.

Preserve us, we beseech thee, from too fond an attachment to the good things of this world. Amidst all the cares and business of life, may it be our principal study, our supreme ambition, to secure an interest in thy favour; and may frequent contemplations on thy fatherly goodness lead us into a rational submission to all the disposals of thy Providence.

In all our dealings with our fellow-creatures may we maintain a steady integrity, and cheerfully embrace every opportunity of doing good to the souls and bodies of all those with whom we converse.

Bestow upon us such a portion of the necessities and conveniencies of life, as thou, in thine unerring wisdom, seeest to be best for us: and may we ever be grateful for, and satisfied with, whatever thou art pleased to bestow, and improve it in the best manner.

As we profess to be the disciples of Jesus, may we frequently contemplate his amiable character; endeavour to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Make us duly sensible, O God, of the many advantages we enjoy by the Christian revelation, and may we often reflect, with the warmest gratitude, on thy amazing love in sending thy only Son, to dispel the thick mists of ignorance

rance and error that hung over a benighted world, and to publish the gracious terms of peace, pardon, and reconciliation. How great, how inſeivably great, O God, is thy goodneſs to the children of men! Oh! may we ever retain a ſenſe of it; may we ever ſincerely abhor whatever is diſpleaſing in thy ſight, and devote ourſelves, and all the powers and faculties of our ſouls to the purpoſes of thy glory.

We commit ourſelves, and all that are near, and dear to us, to thy care and protection, through the whole of this day. Aſſiſt us in every part of duty in which we ſhall be engaged; be with us in all our lawful and honourable undertakings; and may we be in thy fear all the day long.

Theſe our humble ſupplications we offer up, in the name and as the diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, to thee, Our Father who art in Heaven, &c.

A Prayer for WEDNESDAY Evening.

GREAT and glorious God! The eternal and inexhauſtible ſource of light, and life, and joy to univerſal nature! We adore thee as our great creator, our conſtant preſerver, the God in whom we live, move, and have our beings. Thy loving-kindneſs and tender mercies have followed us all the days of our lives. Thou haſt made a liberal proviſion for our comfortable ſubſiſtence in this world; and not only ſo, but, bleſſed, for ever bleſſed be thy name!

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hast given us the strongest assurances of a state of eternal happiness beyond the grave.

We desire, this evening, to bless thee with all our hearts, for the glorious prospect thou hast set before us in thy Son's everlasting Gospel, and for the gracious method thou hast proposed for our obtaining an inheritance that fadeth not away. How reasonable, gracious God! are the terms of the Christian covenant! How great, how unspeakably great the rewards thou hast promised to the sincerely penitent! How shall we, how can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation!

Fill our souls, we earnestly beseech thee, with the warmest gratitude to thee, our God, our Father, and our Friend; and may a sense of thy paternal care, and tender concern for our highest interests powerfully excite us to a chearful and unreserved obedience to all thy holy laws. May thy law be our delight; may we look upon thy service as perfect freedom, and as our highest honour; and may we hate all manner of vice and wickedness with perfect hatred.

Enable us frequently to contemplate the glorious displays of thy goodness in the works of thy hands, and especially thy mercies to the children of men. And, O Father of Mercies, transform us into a resemblance of thy mercy. May we be tender-hearted, sympathizing, and benevolent; true lovers of our country, and friends to all mankind. May we abhor all pride and malice, all cruelty and oppression, and endeavour, according to the extent of our abilities, to make all around us easy and happy.

May

May we be disposed to love our enemies, do good to those who hate and persecute us, that we may prove ourselves to be the genuine children of thee our Heavenly Father; who doest good even to the evil, and the unthankful, who causest the sun to rise on the good, and on the bad, and sendest rain on the just, and on the unjust.

Look down, O God and Father of all! with a compassionate eye on all the inhabitants of this earth. Enlighten the dark corners of it, we beseech thee, with the knowledge of the Gospel, that all men may know thee, the only true God, in Jesus Christ.

May all, who call themselves Christians, approve themselves the disciples of Jesus, by loving one another, by keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and by a hearty zeal for genuine Christianity in its original simplicity and purity.

Be favourable, we beseech thee, to these lands wherein we live, and may the interests of truth and virtue ever flourish amongst us. May those who rule over us be men of prudence and integrity, and may we all live in a faithful and dutiful subjection to their authority.

Be merciful, gracious God! to all the sons and daughters of affliction. Deliver the poor that cry, and the fatherless that have none to help them.

We commend to thy paternal care and goodness all those who are united to us by the ties of nature or friendship; be thou their God, their Father, and their Friend.

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Be gracious to us in this family ; make us all wise to salvation. Teach us, O thou eternal fountain of wisdom ! wherein our true interest consists, and enable us to pursue it with steady purpose of soul.

We would adore that kind Providence which has watched over us this day, and brought us in so much peace and safety to the conclusion of it. Pardon, gracious God, whatever thou hast seen amiss in any part of our conduct ; be our reconciled God in and through a mediator.

We implore thy kind protection throughout the night. Preserve our habitation from every kind of evil ; and may we all awake in the morning, in health and vigour, and with hearts sincerely disposed to love and serve thee.

Now unto thee, the only wise God, be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

A Prayer for THURSDAY Morning.

O LORD, our Heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God ! Thou art possessed of all those glorious excellencies and amiable perfections, which render thee worthy to be adored, loved, and revered by all thy intelligent creatures. Angels and archangels continually surround thy throne, and in the most fervent strains of piety, love, and gratitude, delight to celebrate thy praises : and this morning would we, who are but sinful dust and ashes, join our feeble efforts of praise with theirs ; calling upon our souls, and all that is within us,
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adore and magnify thee, our sovereign Lord and bountiful benefactor, the eternal spring of life and joy to universal nature, the original and ever flowing fountain of good.

We desire to come into thy presence, O thou eternal fountain of purity, with the most profound humility; under a deep and affecting sense of our unworthiness, of our manifold sins, and base ingratitude. We have offended against thee, our Creator, our Father, our supreme and righteous Governor, our unwearied benefactor, the greatest and the best of Beings. We have in numberless instances rebelled against thine authority, abused thy tender mercies, and acted unsuitably to our character as men, and our glorious hopes, as Christians. We have sinned against Heaven, and before thee; before thine omniscience, thy strict justice, thy spotless purity, and are not worthy to be called thy children.

We acknowledge, with shame and confusion of face, that our transgressions are attended with heinous aggravations. We have sinned against the light of our own minds; against the convictions and checks of our own consciences; against our most solemn vows and resolutions to the contrary; and against the most encouraging promises. Such, alas! has been the hardness and obstinacy of our hearts, such our ingratitude and dissingenuity, that neither thy threatnings nor thy mercies have prevailed upon us to forsake our iniquities.

We have destroyed ourselves, O God! but our hope and confidence is in thy mercy. Thou
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hast proclaimed thyself the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abounding in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. Thou art not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; and hast set forth thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to be the propitiation for sin, and our Advocate at the throne of grace. In his name, gracious Father! would we now approach thy throne, and present ourselves before thee as his disciples.

We desire to be deeply humbled in thy sight on account of our manifold iniquities; we hope we can truly say, that we sincerely abhor whatever is displeasing in thy sight, and that it is the fixed purpose of our souls, in thy strength, to reform what has been amiss in our conduct.

Accept us, gracious God! in our return to thee; suffer us not to perish, but receive us into favour, and remember our iniquities no more. Lift up the light of thy countenance upon us, that we may joy in thee our God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and being justified by thy grace, may we be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Assist us, we earnestly beseech thee, to subdue every irregular and corrupt affection; guide us, O God of our salvation and hope! into the paths of virtue and happiness, and never suffer us to deviate from them. Fulfil in us all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power, that we may overcome the world, and overcome ourselves.

Convince us, O God! that all thy laws are righteous and good; and that they are intended
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to raise us to the highest perfection our natures are capable of. Convince us of the equity and goodness of thy government, and that thou wilt make all things work together for good to those who sincerely love and obey thee.

In every relation of life, help us to discharge our duty with chearfulness and sincerity. Raise our minds above every thing that is mean and selfish; and may we rejoice in every opportunity of doing good.

We bless thee for the mercies of last night, and for the light and comforts of this morning. Defend us this day, we beseech thee, from the many evils and dangers to which we are exposed; prosper us in all our just and honourable designs and undertakings, and may we acknowledge thee in all our ways. Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our minds, that we may be defended from all evils and adversities, that may befall the body, and all sinful thoughts and affections, that may pollute the mind.

Hear our prayers, we humbly beseech thee, and accept of us in Jesus Christ, in whose words we further call upon thee, Our Father who art in Heaven, &c.

A Prayer for THURSDAY Evening.

O MOST merciful, and ever blessed Lord our God! The supreme original and absolute sovereign of all things, visible and invisible! We desire, this evening, with profound
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reverence and humility, to prostrate ourselves at the footstool of thy throne, and to adore and magnify thee, as a Being of transcendent and incomprehensible majesty and glory ; of absolute perfection of nature ; of unerring wisdom ; impartial justice ; uncontrollable power ; and unchangeable goodness. Thou upholdest the vast and complicated fabric of the universe by thy almighty power, and the efficacious influence of thy wisdom and goodness ; directing all events for the general good of thy creatures, and the particular good of those, who sincerely love and obey thee.

Worthy art thou, O God ! to receive honour and praise, adoration and worship, from all thy intelligent offspring ; for thou art good to all, and delightest in loving kindness and tender mercies. We bless thee for our creation, our preservation, and all the good things which thy kind Providence has bestowed upon us, to render our passage through this world easy and comfortable. We thank thee for those powers, and faculties, whereby we are capable, in some measure, of tracing the footsteps of thy power, wisdom, and goodness, in the natural and moral world, and of rising to considerable degrees of purity and rectitude. We desire in an especial manner, to praise thee for thy unspeakable love in sending thy Son into the world, and the many privileges and advantages we enjoy as his disciples.

May our conduct and behaviour, gracious God ! bear some proportion to the high and distinguished privileges wherewith we are favoured ;

voured; and as we have so glorious a prospect opened to our view, so noble a prize to contend for, may we, with unwearied ardor and steady resolution, go forward in our Christian course, till at last, we obtain the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. As we name the name of Christ, may we depart from all iniquity; walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

We acknowledge, O God! with shame and confusion of face, that we have made the most ungrateful returns to thee, our supreme and unwearied benefactor. Thou hast nourished and brought us up, but, alas! we have rebelled against thee. Enter not into strict judgment with us, O most merciful Father! Turn us from our iniquities; bless us with thy favour, and cause thy face to shine upon us. Let that grace of thine, which bringeth salvation, effectually teach us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

We hope we can truly say, that it is our earnest desire to approve ourselves in the whole of our conduct to thee, our supreme Governor and omniscient Judge: but such, alas! is the deceitfulness of our hearts, so weak are our best purposes

purposes and resolutions of reformation, and so numerous are the temptations that surround us, that without the gracious influences of thy spirit, we are sensible that we shall deviate from the path of duty and happiness, and render ourselves obnoxious to the just displeasure of the best of Beings. We would not trust to our own strength, therefore, but would humbly and earnestly implore the aids of thy grace to assist us in correcting whatever is amiss in the temper of our minds. Possess our souls, we beseech thee, with an habitual veneration of thy divine majesty, and form us to a cheerful and unreserved submission to thy authority in all things. Inspire us with a love of purity and rectitude, and with a sincere and steady abhorrence of every wicked way.

Extend thy compassionate regards, O Father of mercies ! to the whole human race. Pity, in much mercy pity, those nations that are not only deprived of the glorious light of the Gospel, but are groaning under the hard and unsupportable yoke of tyranny and oppression. Deliver them, gracious Father ! from their merciless oppressors, and bless them with the knowledge of that religion which is perfect freedom. Be merciful to these sinful lands of Great Britain and Ireland. Restrain, we beseech thee, that prophaneness and infidelity, that habitual levity, that unmanly luxury, that sensual taste, which prevails in the midst of us : pour out upon all ranks and degrees of persons, a spirit of consideration, of manly piety, of fervent prayer and supplication, that we may return to thee, the
Lord

Lord our God, from whom we have most wickedly departed.

Remember in mercy all those who are near and dear unto us; may they share in that favour which thou bearest to thine own people. Provide, we beseech thee, for the necessities of the poor; and may all the sons and daughters of affliction find relief and comfort, in their various distresses, by putting their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

We acknowledge, with grateful hearts, thy care of us, and goodness to us throughout the day past, and commit ourselves to thy protection this night. Guard us, we beseech thee, and our habitation, from every evil; and may we be fitted, by refreshing sleep, for the duties and services of the following day.

And now unto him, that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and honour, dominion and power, both now and ever.

Amen.

A Prayer for FRIDAY Morning.

O ADORABLE Majesty! Thou art good to all, and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Each returning day brings fresh instances of thy favour and loving kindness towards us.

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We desire to bless and praise thee, this morning, for thy kind protection during the darkness and silence of the night past, and for the comfortable circumstances wherein we now appear before thee. We bless thee for the continued use of our rational and moral powers; for the necessities, conveniencies, and agreeable accommodations of this present life; and, especially for our glorious hopes as Christians, and for all the spiritual blessings conferred upon us through Jesus Christ the Son of thy love.

We acknowledge, O God! that we are less than the least of thy mercies. Though we have known our duty, yet have we, in numberless instances, neglected to practise it. We have too often followed the devices and desires of our own foolish and corrupt hearts, and refused to be governed by thy wise and equitable laws. We confess, O God, with sincere sorrow, that we have not rendered unto thee according to the benefits thou hast bestowed upon us; that we have not improved our advantages and privileges as we ought to have done, nor made that progress in virtue and true religion, that might reasonably be expected from us.

Fill our souls, gracious Father! with a godly sorrow for all the errors of our past conduct, for the many instances of our dissingenuity and ingratitude; and according to thy mercies in Christ Jesus, the Son of thy love, blot out all our transgressions. Enable us henceforth, to look upon all manner of vice and wickedness with aversion and horror; as the stain and reproach of our reasonable natures; as rebellion
against

against our rightful sovereign ; as ingratitude against our supreme benefactor ; as the necessary source of disorder, shame, remorse and confusion here, and of unspeakable ruin and misery hereafter. May we look upon true religion as the ornament, dignity, and supreme felicity of our intelligent nature ; as the only means of securing thy favour and acceptance ; as the firmest support under every pressure and difficulty ; as the genuine source of inward joy and serenity ; and as what alone can qualify us for relishing the sublime and refined pleasures of a happy immortality.

Ever mindful of our high original, may we disdain to be enslaved to sense and appetite ; but taking a nobler aim, may we aspire after the perfection of our Heaven-born natures : exchange sensual and earthly, for manly and divine pleasures ; the gratifications of brutes, for the joys of angels. May all our desires, appetites and affections, be brought under due subjection to the law of reason, and to thy Son's everlasting Gospel. May we endeavour to check and controul every tendency to vice ; cultivate our relish for moral enjoyments ; and sacrifice every present temporary good, and the most alluring prospects of sensual gratifications to the duty we owe thee our supreme Lord and Governor.

Enable us, O God ! to exercise ourselves constantly in keeping consciences void of offence towards thee and all men ; that we may ever possess that inward serenity, which results from temperate and regular desires, just and rational pursuits, and the soul-reviving sense of thy fa-

vour and approbation. May we never rest satisfied with any lower attainments in virtue, but forgetting the things that are behind, may we press forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; endeavouring according to the extent of our finite natures, to be perfect, as thou, our Father in Heaven, art perfect. May the consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of this our probation state, powerfully excite us to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure; that whenever it shall please thee to give us our eternal summons, we may have no guilty fears to distract our minds, but be able to welcome the awful message with composure and serenity of mind; behave with honour to our natures, with honour to our Christian characters, in the closing scenes of life; and with humble and chearful submission resign our souls into the hands of our faithful Creator and compassionate Redeemer, in the joyful hopes of a glorious and blessed immortality.

Hear, we beseech thee, gracious Father! these our humble petitions, and accept of our thanksgivings, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose words we desire farther to call upon thee, saying, Our Father who art in Heaven, &c.

A Prayer for FRIDAY Evening.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, the fountain of all goodness, we desire, this evening, with reverence and humility to approach

approach thy throne, and to adore thee as a Being of spotless purity, of unchangeable wisdom and justice; the supreme Lord and Governor of all things.

The Heavens declare thy glory. O God! the firmament sheweth thy handy-work. The whole earth, the whole system of nature is full of abundant testimonies of thy loving kindness and mercy. Though, in many cases, thy judgments are unsearchable by us, and thy ways past our finding out, yet we know assuredly that thou art righteous in all thy ways, holy in all thy works, that mercy and truth go before thy face, and that thou art ever ready to extend thy pardoning mercy to thy frail degenerate creatures, upon their sincere repentance and reformation.

We desire to magnify the Lord, and to rejoice in the God of our salvation. Mighty art thou, O Lord, in wisdom, wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. We esteem ourselves highly honoured by being under thy protection, and having all our affairs ordered, and over-ruled by thy Providence. We desire to resign ourselves entirely to thy disposal, to refer all our desires to thy will, chearfully to embrace whatever befalls us, and willingly to follow whithersoever thou leadest us.

We acknowledge, gracious God! that thy service is perfect freedom; that thy laws are all holy, just, and good; that they tend to the perfection of our natures; and that in keeping of them there is great reward; yet notwith-

standing this our firm persuasion of the wisdom and goodness of thy laws, we have, alas! in numberless instances, rebelled against thine authority, deviated from the paths of thy commandments, covered our souls with shame, guilt, and pollution, and exposed ourselves to thy just displeasure. We confess, O Lord, that we have sinned; our own hearts accuse us; our consciences witness against us. Be merciful, O Father of mercies! to our unrighteousness, pardon our numerous and highly aggravated offences, and be graciously reconciled to us, according to the riches of thy grace in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Renew us, we earnestly beseech thee, in the temper of our minds; enable us to forsake all our vices, and to have no more fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Grant us the gracious aids of thy spirit, to enlighten our understandings, to rectify our wills, and to check all the irregular propensities of our natures, that they may never more break in upon our peace, nor hinder our progress in the ways of piety and virtue.

As we have taken upon us the profession of Christianity, may we walk worthy of our high and honourable vocation. May we govern our lives uniformly by the precepts of the gospel; imitate that pattern of divine excellence, which is exhibited to us in the character of our blessed Redeemer; and cherish in our souls all those divine and amiable qualities, which rendered him the friend of mankind, and the favourite of Heaven.

Enable

Enable us frequently to reflect on the shortness and uncertainty of life ; and may such reflections engage us to make the best use of our present moments, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and apply ourselves to the great business of life with the utmost attention and diligence, before our feet tremble on the dark mountains of death. May the prospects of a happy immortality raise us above every mean and sordid pursuit ; encourage us under every pressure and difficulty ; and counterbalance the weight of all worldly temptations. May we be constant, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour shall not be in vain : and, finally, may we obtain the end of our faith, and of our hope, even the salvation of our immortal souls.

Thou hast made it our duty not only to pray for ourselves, but to offer up our intercessions for all men ; in obedience therefore to thy command, and as a testimony of our benevolent regards to the whole community of mankind, we pray, that thy ways may be known on earth, and thy saving health to every nation. May thy antient people the Jews be converted to the faith of Christ, and the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in ; that throughout all the earth, there may be but one Lord, and his name one.

Reform the reformed churches more and more ; may they entirely renounce all dominion over the faith and consciences of their Fellow-Christians, and be brought nearer to the truth

as it is in Jesus. Root up every plant, which thou our Heavenly Father hast not planted, and rectify every thing that is amiss, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and practice, according to the standard of thy holy word.

Bless, we beseech thee, our native country. Defend us from all our enemies; put a stop to our prevailing vices; and promote amongst us that righteousness which exalts a nation. Be gracious to our only rightful sovereign king George. Bless him in his person, and in his councils; assist him in the weighty affairs of government; crown all his endeavours for the publick good with abundant success; and under his government may we lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty.

Visit with compassion all the sons and daughters of affliction; be graciously pleased to support and comfort them, and let them find thee a present help in trouble.

And now, O Lord! we commit ourselves to the protection of thy Providence through the silent watches of the ensuing night. Preserve us, we beseech thee, and all who belong to us, from every evil, and from every danger. May we lie down and be refreshed with quiet sleep, and arise in the morning with renewed strength and vigour, to magnify and praise thy holy name.

Hear us, merciful God! pardon our sins, and accept of our services, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate: to whom with thee, O Father! be everlasting praises. *Amen.* 7 DE61

A Prayer for SATURDAY Morning.

ALMIGHTY and most gracious Father! Thou art God over all, blessed for ever; a Being self-existent, eternal, independent, unchangeable. By thy power, O God! the Heavens were made, and all the hosts of them by the breath of thy mouth. The earth also, with its inhabitants, is the work of thy hands. But thou, eternal God! art, and wast, and art to come; without beginning, and without end.

The Heavens declare thy glory, O Lord! and the firmament sheweth thy handy-work; the earth too is full of thy goodness, and proclaims thy praise. Thou providest bountifully for all thy creatures: they are hungry, and thou feedest them; they ask, and thou grantest their requests; thou openest wide thy bountiful hand, and liberally satisfiest thy whole creation with good.

We desire, this morning, with hearts full of gratitude and love, to adore and worship thee, the original author, the wise preserver, and bountiful benefactor of the universe. We desire to bless thee with all our hearts for placing us so high in the scale of being; for adorning our nature with reasoning powers and virtuous principles; for the continuance and preservation of life; and for that rich variety of pleasures thou affordest us.

We adore and praise thee, gracious Father! for that rich grace and mercy thou hast manifested in the redemption of mankind; for that perfect

perfect pattern of all holiness and virtue which Jesus Christ has set before us ; for the pure and excellent precepts delivered to us in the Gospel ; for the joyful assurance of pardon and a happy immortality, on the reasonable terms of repentance, and an holy life ; and for the promised aid of thy holy spirit, to strengthen and quicken us in the pursuit of virtue and everlasting happiness.

We confess, O Lord, that we are not worthy of the least of thy mercies ; we acknowledge with shame and confusion of face, that we have, in numberless instances, transgressed thy laws, notwithstanding that they are perfectly just and reasonable in themselves ; calculated for the perfection of our natures, and for advancing our highest interests. Thou hast endowed us, gracious God ! with distinguishing powers and faculties ; but, alas ! we have neglected to improve them ; we have laid our glory in the dust, defaced thy image, abused thy grace, trampled on thy authority, and turned a deaf ear to thy commands.

We lament before thee our ingratitude and dissingenuity, the perverseness of our wills, the depravity of our hearts, our inconstancy and irresolution, our proneness to sinful lusts, and our reluctance to the practice of what is excellent and praise-worthy. Renew us, O most merciful Father of our spirits ! in the temper of our minds. Cleanse our hearts from every pollution ; enable us, by thy grace, to act agreeably to the dignity of our rational nature, to mortify every corrupt affection, to subdue any
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evil habits we may have unhappily contracted, and let no iniquity prevail against us.

May thy holy spirit, we earnestly entreat thee, O thou God of all grace and mercy! fix and strengthen our wavering hearts, establish our virtuous purposes, enable us to resist the various temptations with which we are surrounded, and surmount all the opposition we may have to encounter in the course of a virtuous and holy life. Forsake us not, we beseech thee, for we are weak, imperfect creatures: suffer us not to be tempted above what we are able to bear; but with the temptation prepare a way for our escape. May neither the cares of this world, nor the deceitfulness of riches; neither the allurements of false pleasure, nor the corruptions of our own hearts; may neither things present, nor things to come, ever separate our souls from the love of God and goodness, or cause us to deviate from the path of our duty in any instance.

May we frequently contemplate the glorious excellencies of thy nature; entertain honourable and becoming sentiments of thy Providence and moral character; love thee with all our hearts, as the kind Father, and bountiful Benefactor of the universe; and manifest the sincerity of our love to thee, by a cheerful obedience to all thy holy laws, an humble resignation to thy will, and an entire submission to all the allotments of thy Providence.

May we be careful to preserve those benevolent affections, which thou hast implanted in us, in their due strength and exercise; endeavour

vour to keep our minds free from every malignant, every unkind passion; may none of us render evil for evil, railing for railing, but be always ready to bless them that curse us, and to do good to those who despitefully use and persecute us. May we rejoice with those that rejoice, weep with those that weep, endeavour, according to our ability, to promote the happiness of all around us, and may we never be weary of well-doing.

We thank thee, gracious God! for the mercies of last night, and that we are brought in safety to the beginning of another day. Defend us, this day, we beseech thee, from all evils and dangers; may we be diligent in the duties of our several worldly employments, and careful to maintain upon our minds a sense of thy presence with us and inspection over us.

Hear and answer us, O most merciful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose words we farther call upon thee: Our Father who art in Heaven, &c.

A Prayer for SATURDAY Evening.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God and Father, the fountain of all goodness! We desire, this evening, with sincere humility and reverence, to approach thy throne, to pay thee the tribute which the mercies of every day claim from us, to acknowledge thy dominion over us, thy just propriety in us, and, with grateful hearts to adore thee, as our great Creator,

ator, our constant preserver, our supreme Lord, and bountiful benefactor.

We desire to rejoice, that thou, O Lord, a being of absolute perfection, of universal and unchangeable goodness, art at the head of the universe, that thy kingdom ruleth over all, and that all events throughout the whole extent of thy wide spread dominion, are under the direction of unerring wisdom. We rejoice that all the various orders of thy intelligent creatures art the constant beneficiaries of thy kind Providence, that thou suppliest all their wants, and art conducting them in the wisest and best manner, to the highest happiness their natures are capable of.

We would adore that goodness which continually diffuses beauty, order, and happiness through every part of nature; which is not confined to the happiness of the Heavenly-world, but visits with kind regards the ungrateful sons of men. How wonderful are thy works, O God! How amiable thy character! How astonishing the displays of thy wisdom and goodness!

Great reason have we, who now appear before thee, to celebrate thy praises, and speak well of thy name. Thou hast made a bountiful provision for our comfortable subsistence here on earth; hast spread our table, and filled our cup; hast cast our lot in a land of Gospel-light and liberty; and hast put into our hands the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation. Thy watchful Providence has conducted us through numberless dangers
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and difficulties, which we could neither foresee nor prevent, by any prudence or power of our own, and has preserved our lives to this moment.

We bless thee, especially, for the hope of eternal happiness in a better world, and for the many valuable means and helps thou hast given us, to improve our souls in knowledge and goodness, and train us up for that eternal world, towards which we are hastening. Thy mercies, O Lord, are more than can be numbered; they are new to us every day: grant, we beseech thee, that we may always reflect upon them with gratitude, and express our gratitude, not by our tongues only, but by devoting our lives to thy service, and by a cheerful and unreserved obedience to all thy holy laws.

May the consideration of thy greatness and excellency, and of thy goodness to us, and to all thy creatures, effectually engage us to love thee with all our hearts; to honour and reverence thee, as our Father and Lord; to put our whole trust and confidence in thee; and, in all events whatsoever, to resign ourselves to thy disposal, who knowest best what is fit for us.

Grant, O God, that we may cherish and cultivate in our hearts, a sincere love and goodwill to all our fellow-creatures, thy children, and our brethren. May we, in all things, study to do justly, to love mercy, and to be useful in our several stations, as becomes those who are members of the great community of mankind.

Preserve us, O God of our salvation, from
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malice and revenge, from envy and hatred, from pride and vain-glory, from covetousness and ambition; and may we cultivate genuine humility, candor, mutual forbearance, and condescension. May we rejoice in the prosperity of our neighbours, and sympathize with them in their distresses; and may charity and good will, mercy and tenderness, adorn the whole of our lives.

As we profess ourselves Christians, may we govern our lives uniformly by the precepts of the Gospel; and may the glorious prospect that is set before us, animate us to such pursuits as are suited to the nature, and worthy the ambition of immortal souls. May we never impair our understandings, or disqualify ourselves for the honourable discharge of the various duties incumbent upon us, by the intemperate pursuit of unmanly pleasures; but may we aspire after that state of rational liberty, which will be the best qualification for the attainment of virtue, and the true enjoyment of life.

May the light of the everlasting Gospel, O God, be diffused over all the habitable earth. Put an end, we beseech thee, to idolatry and superstition, and may pure religion universally prevail. Support and defend the protestant cause and interest, we earnestly intreat thee, and let no weapon formed against it prosper.

Bless these kingdoms of Britain and Ireland, and may the interests of virtue, liberty, and true religion always flourish in them. We pray for our only rightful sovereign king George. Defend him, O King of Kings! from all his enemies;

mies; may his throne be established in righteousness, and surrounded with wise and faithful counsellors. Bless all our governors, supreme and subordinate; inspire them with the love of virtue; may they have a sincere regard to the publick good; hate covetousness, and all selfish and corrupt views.

Extend thy mercy, O Father of Mercies, to all the sons and daughters of affliction. Give them patience to suffer all thy will: support them by the consolations of thy good spirit; and may these light afflictions which are but for a moment, work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Be gracious, we beseech thee, to all our friends, relations, and acquaintance; suit thy mercies to their various wants and circumstances, which are intimately known to thee; guide them through life in paths of innocence and virtue, and make their way prosperous.

We bless thee for thy kind protection throughout the day and week past. Pardon, gracious God, whatever thou hast seen amiss in our conduct, and may thy blessing be upon us this night. May we be fitted, by quiet and refreshing rest, for serving thee on thy own day, and for offering up unto thee a pure, holy, and acceptable sacrifice.

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

